



# LUTHERAN EDUCATION

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# Lutheran Education

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# From Where I Sit

by Jonathan M. Barz, Editor

## Do the Dishes or Pave the Driveway?

In tackling the theme of educational choice, this issue of *Lutheran Education* enters a tangled and thorny area. The question of “choice” has been complicated in American society of late by the ways in which the term has been coopted by partisans of competing political agendas. The most conspicuous example, of course, is how those supporting abortion rights proudly style themselves “Pro-Choice” (obscuring the fact that they are privileging one human being’s choice over another’s). Consider also the debate over a “Patients’ Bill of Rights.” In arguing for the conservatives’ version, Robert Moffit argues that the solution to health care funding is “the same one that gave us 5-cents-a-minute long distance, \$10 overnight shipping to anywhere in the world and the 59-cent cheeseburger at McDonald’s: Free-market competition. Let workers choose their HMOs—rather than be forced to take the one their employer picks—and watch the difference.” Proponents of the Democrat’s version of such legislation, on the other hand, argue for patient choice as an *alternative* to market forces: “Patients Before Profits.” One can enlist the rhetoric of “choice” to support a variety of agendas.

So what about “school choice” as a means to education reform? Should we in Lutheran education be for it or against it? Clearly the answer depends, at least in part, on how we define choice and how we view its consequences. The articles that follow will offer competing perspectives on that question, addressing our church’s history, the rhetoric surrounding choice, and personal experience with a voucher system, the most conspicuous mode of encouraging school choice currently. Those pieces will do the intellectual heavy lifting on this issue, but I’ll try to set the table with a few observations.

I was privileged to grow up in a home that valued choice. . . . Rather than ordering me to do something, my mother would often present me with a choice about which chores I would prefer to do: “Would you like to do the dishes,” she might ask, “or would you rather pave the driveway?” Or my father would say, “You may *choose* whatever time you would like to come home on Friday night (but if you *choose* to come home after curfew, understand that you have *chosen* to spend the rest of your adolescence confined to your room).” What I learned about choice as a child, I now realize, was that 1) few choices are entirely free from coercion and 2) choices come with consequences. Perhaps those aren’t bad starting points for thinking about school choice.

My first exposure to the debate over state aid to parochial schools occurred during the Michigan “parochiaid” debate in

1970. At the urging of parents who argued that they were being doubly taxed in paying the expenses of their children at private schools and also supporting public schools, the state legislature passed Public Act 100, providing direct support to eligible private schools (to be used only for instruction in nonreligious subjects). I was a student in a Lutheran school at the time, and what I recall from that debate was the tremendous anxiety some within the church felt about what constraints we might be inviting by allowing the state to participate in funding our schools. As I learned from my father, choices often come with some form of coercion, so it seemed reasonable to think that accepting some form of “subsidy” might entail accepting certain constraints. Bob Toepper discusses this issue at length in his survey of how The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has responded to the question of accepting state funding and the fears of governmental control such funding opportunities have raised.

My next direct exposure to issues of government funding occurred when I was teaching at a Lutheran high school. The Supreme Court ruled in *Aguiar v. Felton* in 1985 that, although public funds could be used to provide certain services to parochial schools, allowing public employees to provide services on the premises of church-related schools constituted “excessive entanglement of church and state.” I came to call this decision (since reversed) “the Winnebago Rule,” after our school counselor, paid by Title I funds, began meeting with students in an RV parked outside the back door of the school. The lesson here may be that one of the dangers of accepting government funding may be entanglement in bureaucratic silliness.

The specter of governmental intrusion is not the only consequence to consider in arguing for school choice; I’m equally leery of the coercion of the marketplace. I’m not convinced that allowing market forces to operate freely will necessarily drive education toward higher quality. When Robert Moffit cites the McDonald’s cheeseburger as the epitome of the free market system, he offers a great example of efficiency but not necessarily of the full flourishing of human creativity and potential. When the “product” in question is something as counter-cultural as the mission of Christian schools, it seems even less likely that market forces will operate to sustain our highest values.

A final thought: In describing his experiences with Milwaukee’s voucher system, Duane Miller offers an exciting example of how this program benefits students and Lutheran schools by allowing some who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford a Lutheran education to choose one. But if we are to be consistent in supporting educational choice, we need to consider that all may not choose as we would wish. So how do we respond to those who choose to educate their own children? Sherry Prange describes one Lutheran school’s efforts to extend their educational ministry to homeschooling families. Perhaps a more difficult question for some is, how do we respond to those in our congregations who, for whatever reasons, choose public schools rather than Lutheran? If we are to adopt the rhetoric of “choice” in arguing for vouchers, don’t we need to recognize the right of fellow Lutherans to make this decision, too? Otherwise, it’s subsidy, not choice, that we are supporting.†

## Government Financial Support for Parochial Education Within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Historical Perspective

*Dr. Robert Toepper is a 1962 graduate of Concordia University, River Forest, IL. He earned both the M.A. in history in 1967 and the Ph.D. in social sciences education in 1979 at Washington University, St. Louis, MO. He has taught at Lutheran High School South, St. Louis, and Concordia University, Bronxville, NY. He is currently Professor of Economics at Concordia University, River Forest.*

Several questions surround the issue of financial support of parochial education during the early years of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). Who is responsible to finance the Christian education of youngsters? Parents? The sponsoring congregation? If both, in what proportion? And, who should pay for the education of non-members' or "strangers'" (as they were called) children? As time passed third-source funding also became an issue, especially involving the acceptance of government funds. Today, the idea of tuition "vouchers" for parochial education is both a political and an ecclesiastical issue.

Throughout its history, the Missouri Synod has expressed concerns regarding how its parochial school system has been funded. The early context for these concerns included, on one hand, a fear that the children might "go native" in the American wilderness and, on the other hand, a warning to parents *not* to send their children to public schools because of their

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secularizing influences. At a time when educational leaders in the United States were trying to develop public financial support for a fledgling public elementary school system, LCMS leaders were attempting to develop similar financial support by all members within congregations for the general support of the parochial elementary school (Repp, 1947, pp. 36-38).

Early in Missouri's history, member congregations considered financial support for the education of children primarily as the obligation of the children's parents. Only a few congregations accepted the idea that it was the responsibility of the entire parish to fund the parish's school. On the other hand, the Synod's position was that, in keeping with the view that the local congregation was the sovereign group within the Church on earth, it was, therefore, the whole congregation that was responsible to support the school, call its teachers, develop its policies, determine its curriculum, and oversee its operations. Without such a status, the school became a "private" school, rather than a "parochial" school.

Since, at present, tuition vouchers for parochial education are both a political and theological issue, it appears appropriate to attempt to chronicle the Missouri Synod's position on government support as a source of parochial school support.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the position became established that all congregation members were to support the parochial school, whether or not they had children in the school. The competition from the "free"

public school helped solidify this practice (Stach, 1947, pp. 152-153).

Throughout the years, the Synod has maintained, with appropriate statistical support, that parishes that supported parochial elementary schools were better contributors to the work of the church-at-large than parishes without schools. This evidence countered the argument that the schools diverted financial support from other agencies of the church (Keinath, 1942, 343-345; Stelhorn, 1963, p. 477; and Kramer, 1975, p. 68).

By the 1960s, concerns were again expressed that parents of children attending Lutheran elementary schools were being expected to assume a greater proportion of the financial responsibility for the support of the schools, either through tuition payments or increased weekly offering contributions. The Synod's view of public financial assistance to parochial education became an issue. Some Lutheran



congregations declined to accept federal aid of any kind for their children.

Since, at present, tuition vouchers for parochial education are both a political and theological issue, it appears appropriate to attempt to chronicle the Missouri Synod's position on government support as a source of parochial school support.

## **The Issue of Government Support as a Source of School Financing Within the Lcms**

The first questions concerning state aid for parish schools were raised in 1866. In that year, at the Southern District Convention in Serbin, TX, synodical President H. C. Schwan had been asked to give a supplementary essay on the question of state aid for parish schools. President Schwann stated that a Christian congregation should not accept state school money to support even a part of its school's operation. His essay treated the matter under four headings:

1. May a Christian congregation enter into such a relationship with the State school that it receives State school money to support either its entire school or even for a part?
2. May a Christian congregation or a Christian parish schoolteacher admit that the use or the spiritual application of the divine Word may be forbidden for the greater part of the school day?
3. Is a Christian congregation right when it sacrifices its authority to supervise the school for some temporal advantages?
4. Can Christians rightly take offense at this mixing of Church and State?

The answer proposed by Dr. Schwan and accepted by the convention for question one was, "except for very exceptional circumstances, 'No.'" For questions two and three an unqualified "no" was the answer and for question four the answer was "yes" (Wolbrecht, 1947, p. 108).

According to Herbert H. Gross, writing in 1935, the Missouri Synod felt it was the obligation of the state to support public education. It held that Christians should willingly contribute toward this support. The Missouri Synod, however, opposed any use of public funds for its parochial schools. The Synod felt that such a procedure would wrongfully combine church and state; it would grant harmful powers to the state in control of Christian education; and it would mean that Lutheran taxpayers also would be supporting the schools of other denominations, which it also opposed. Instead, Lutheran Christians were expected to "cheerfully and liberally" contribute towards the maintenance of their parochial schools. According to Gross, "The official declarations in opposition to the use of State funds have not been numerous, since the problem has not at any time become critical in the past" (p. 78).

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In 1944, the Missouri Synod adopted a position that distinguished between a school's social service program, such as library services, school lunches, health services, and transportation, and the teaching program, meaning the areas of curriculum, instruction, and philosophy of education. Since the social service program was available to all children of school age in the society irrespective of their school association, the congregations could accept these services--and might even demand that they be provided. On the other hand, support of the teaching program involved the religious tenets of the church and could not be accepted. This position was reaffirmed by the Synod in 1947, 1950, and 1953 (Kramer, 1975, p. 140).

The Synod's position in 1944, entitled "State Support of Church Schools," was that

[t]he social service program should in equity be available to all children of school age irrespective of their school association, just as in the case of public library service. . . . Rendering this service does not promote the religious tenets of the church. . . . All conditions germane to the program can be observed without sacrifice of sovereignty on the part of the state or sacrifice of principle on the part of the church. Hence the church can accept this program as it is offered and may even be within its rights in demanding it. (*Proceedings*, 1944, p. 132)

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Missouri Synod considered the impending availability of federal aid to public education as a threat to Lutheran parochial education. The additional dollars would give public education advantages that it had not previously possessed.

According to Albert G. Merkens, professor of religious education at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, writing in February, 1960, if government aid was provided on a non-preferential basis to religious elementary schools, the Missouri Synod would

have an open mind to entertain proposals for broader cooperation between church and state in elementary education. Whether or not it is wise or expedient for the church to request or accept subsidies for its schools is a matter that must be given separate consideration. (289)

In June, 1960, N. S. Tjernagel, associate professor of history and religion at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, IL, responded to Merkens' and an earlier *Lutheran Education* article. He stated that

Two articles in recent issues of *Lutheran Education* have erected a structure of evidence to support the assertion that state or Federal aid to private education violates neither Constitutional nor Scriptural principles. Both articles demonstrated that no valid principle of separation of church and state is

impugned by the expenditure of taxes for supporting Christian schools on a non-preferential basis. (p. 491)

Tjernagel summarized their argument well: that the state might exercise a detrimental control over church schools to the point of violating the religious purposes for which they were established (p. 492). However, Tjernagel disagreed with both authors' warnings against the dangers of receiving such aid on the grounds that the base of American education needed broadening. According to Tjernagel, public morality in the United States had broken down and "the historical development of a secular system of education in America has been detrimental to the national morality" (p. 494).

In 1961, the Board of Parish Education issued a statement on "Federal Aid to Church Schools" (*Proceedings*, 1962, p. 202), which was adopted by the Synod in 1962. In essence, this

statement applied the 1944 position on state aid to the federal level, again distinguishing between social services and the teaching program. Aid for social service programs was still favored, but aid for teachers' salaries, buildings, equipment, textbooks, loans to church-related schools, and tax credits for the full cost of tuition in non-

public schools were opposed. However, according to Kramer (1975, p. 140), at a later time the Missouri Synod supported tax credits for part of the cost of parochial schooling. The 1962 statement also favored the inclusion of tuition paid to nonpublic schools as a contribution deductible on federal and state income tax returns.

According to Kramer (1975), what the Synod feared in 1962 was a measure of government control over schools that received federal money, a control that "would be affected by the amount of federal aid, by the permanency of federal support, and by the purposes for which the funds are provided." As a result, the church would become obligated to the federal government where it could not "in good conscience submit its teaching program to a secular authority" (p. 140).

Kramer (1975, p. 140), asserted that one of the early proponents of the acceptance

**What the Synod feared in 1962 was a measure of government control over schools that received federal money, a control that "would be affected by the amount of federal aid, by the permanency of federal support, and by the purposes for which the funds are provided."**

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of federal and state aid by parochial schools was John L. Strietelmeier, a Valparaiso University professor and, for a time, a member of the Synod's Board of Parish Education. Strietelmeier maintained that the question of public aid was largely a question of economics. He held that all enterprises that depended on voluntary contributions, including church-related schools, would eventually experience difficult times because of the "growing percentage of economically non-productive people in our population." Here he was referring to the old who no longer earned and the young who did not earn yet. He advocated that LCMS schools assert their "rightful claim" to public assistance. Although he was aware of the possibility of government controls, he felt that "we are mistaken if we suppose that our schools operate today without any important government controls" (Strietelmeier, 1963, p. 11).

Early in 1965, Kramer reported, Synod's Board of Parish Education convened a meeting with a number of informed consultants for a thorough discussion of public aid, specifically federal aid, to church-related schools (p. 141). This gathering gave impetus to a resolution on federal aid at the forthcoming LCMS convention. The denomination approved such aid under circumstances where it was not inimical to the church. However, the 1965 resolution did not pass without opposition. It was adopted by a vote of 291 to 252. A move for reconsideration failed and an attempt in 1967 to rescind the 1965 resolution failed to receive any substantial support.

The 1965 resolution stated that federal aid offered to all children attending public, private, and parochial schools undergirded the free exercise of religion for parents and made parental choice possible in the education of their children. Therefore, the convention resolved that "federal aid for children attending nonpublic schools, as authorized by the Congress and defined by the courts, be deemed acceptable so long as it does not interfere with the distinctive purposes for which such schools are maintained."

Late in 1965, Arthur L. Miller, Executive Secretary of the Synod's Board of Parish Education, stated that prior to the passage of the 1965 federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, discussions of federal aid to nonpublic schools were largely academic. Up until that act, nonpublic schools qualified for the following types of aid: participation in the hot lunch program; National Defense Education Act (NDEA) loans for equipment to teach science, mathematics, and foreign languages; participation of nonpublic teachers in NDEA institutes; opportunity to acquire equipment under the Surplus Property Act; and low-interest loans to college students preparing to teach in nonpublic schools (pp. 118-119). According to Miller,

With the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the impasse that had bogged federal aid to education for many years was finally

resolved. President Johnson's education bill provided for a series of "special purpose aid" programs that extended the concept of federal aid to all children and youth of the nation, whether they attended public schools or nonpublic schools. (p. 119)

Miller concluded:

How Lutheran schools will use the service made available under the 1965 Education Act remains to be seen. It is clear that no one should expect too much too soon. As citizens we have the privilege and the responsibility to cooperate with the federal government and with our states and local communities in seeking to improve the quality of education in our country. It will be interesting to observe what happens to education in the United States as a result of this ambitious federal program. For all who are responsible for the welfare of Lutheran schools it will be necessary to proceed courageously and wisely to make sure that the best interests of pupils and their Lutheran schools are served and protected. (p. 125)

In 1965, Beck, in his general study of parochial education in all Lutheran bodies in the United States, summarized the financial commitment of Lutheran education throughout the United States as follows:

The *support of schools* rests entirely with the congregation, save in the case of a growing number of mission-congregations too small to bear the cost of maintenance. Since teachers receive salaries equivalent to those of teachers in the public schools, the average cost per pupil runs fairly high but is lower than that in public schools. The expenses of the school are usually included in the annual budget and are defrayed out of the general offerings. Tuition - which is officially discouraged by the synods - is voluntary or prescribed in but one fifth of the schools, the others being entirely free. In a considerable number of schools text-books are furnished free or on a rental basis. No attempt has ever been made by Lutheran schools to secure public funds. The position of the church has always been that parochial education was solely a function of the Church, that the principle of separation of Church and State had to be maintained, and that public funds must not be used for private purposes. (p. 411)

In 1966, the Board of Parish Education explained the course the Missouri Synod had taken relative to state aid to parochial education in the following manner:

The Synod had approved statements right along that aid to children for auxiliary services or "social welfare services" is acceptable. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 emphasizes that the aid is to children and not to schools. However, the definition of auxiliary services has been considerably

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expanded in that some benefits go for remedial reading which is a curriculum area, for counseling, and other purposes.... The Synod has not changed its basic policy on aid under the Child Benefit Theory (the theory that aid to children, but not to schools, is acceptable). It has, however, expanded its concept to include other special services in addition to purely social welfare services. The principle that the local parish is responsible for the final decision has also not changed. (*Parish Education Bulletin*, June, 1966, pp. 20-21)

Late in 1967, Secretary of Schools William A. Kramer reported how the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 had affected Lutheran schools and the pupils in these schools. In general he reported that students in Lutheran schools did not receive benefits comparable to public school benefits because some Lutheran congregations declined to accept federal aid of any kind for their children; benefits were primarily planned with public schools in mind or some states restricted accessibility to nonpublic school students; Title I, which controlled the bulk of the funds, did not apply as generally to the needs of nonpublic schools as to public schools; and some Lutheran school principals made a lesser effort than others toward participation (p. 140).

The financial benefits to LCMS parochial schools were higher in states like Ohio and Pennsylvania, which allocated funds for the instructional program in parochial schools until the courts declared such legislation unconstitutional. Textbook loan programs provided substantial benefits in New York and six or seven other states. However, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, all public aid to students in Lutheran schools amounted to only a fraction less than three per cent of total school costs (Kramer, 1975, p.143).

In 1969, at its Denver convention, the Synod dealt with the whole range of government aid and encouraged synodical, district, and congregational boards of education to "actively promote and, where possible, help to shape legislation which is acceptable in terms of the [1965] Detroit resolution" (*Proceedings*, 1969, p. 133).

In 1969, Kramer reported that "contributions rank far above any other source in current practice" but "tuition as a means of school support has become more prevalent in recent years, due to rising costs" (p. 118). According to Kramer, the Synod's statements on federal and state aid allowed individual congregations and schools to decide whether or not their children should receive federal aid benefits.

In 1970, Kramer wrote, "few church leaders see any theological barriers to public aid, that is, they see no biblical evidence for or against it" (pp. 142-143). The concerns focused on the terms under which the aid was provided, the controls that may be imposed as a result of the aid, and the internal problem of maintaining willing local

support for the schools. As to the terms under which the aid was provided, Kramer wrote:

Schools should be permitted to serve the state's "secular purpose" [of rearing competent and useful citizens] within their own orientation as long as support does not go for direct religious instruction, worship, or preparation of students for church membership. Appeal to religious motivation in an English course, for example, is not establishment of a religion. It falls more into the category of "teaching about religion", which is permissible. A school must preserve its integrity and prerogative to be itself and to serve its own purposes within the larger concept of serving the public purpose of state and community.

On control, Kramer envisioned acceptable controls to include adherence to civil rights requirements; accounting for funds, materials, and services received; observance of attendance laws, length of school day and school year; requirements for teacher certification; and adherence to health and safety standards. However, the rights that could not be surrendered by parochial schools were to employ teachers of their own choice; to maintain admission policies that granted priority to children of church members; and to maintain their religious orientation. To surrender any of these, he maintained, would be to "make their schools public schools in fact if not in name." According to Kramer, the maintenance of willing and generous church-member support of the schools continued to be critically important despite the acceptance of some state support (Kramer, 1970, pp. 12-13).

In testimony on public aid to nonpublic schools presented to the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Ways and Means on August 15, 1972, Dr. Al H. Senske, Secretary of Schools of the Board for Parish Education of the Missouri Synod, stated that the Synod had developed a policy on public aid prior to the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. What Senske asked the Committee to consider was that the federal government provide sufficient aid to enable parents to exercise the educational option to send their children to parochial schools. Tax credits, financial assistance to parents who chose nonpublic education for their children in elementary and secondary schools, seemed to him to offer the most promising solution to what he felt was a long-felt and increasingly difficult problem (Senske, 1972, pp. 142-143).

Approximate figures on federal aid to students in Lutheran schools were compiled for most of the years when such aid was available. For the 1966-67 school year pupils in 100 plus Lutheran schools benefited to the extent of roughly \$100,000 under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the pupils in 600 plus schools to the extent of about \$200,000 under Title II. During the 1973-74 school

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year, benefits amounted to \$212,298 in federal aid, \$1,410,985 in state aid, and \$190,240 in other aid and grants. All public aid to students in Lutheran schools amounted to a fraction less than three per cent of total school costs (Kramer, 1975, p. 143).

On June 25, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States declared unconstitutional a New York tax credit law and three New York financial aid programs for non-public elementary and secondary schools as well as a Pennsylvania tuition reimbursement law (Kramer, 1975, pp. 144-145). A new and separate United States Department of Education came into being by congressional action in May 1980, and included an Office of

Nonpublic Education headed by an Assistant Secretary. The name of this office was changed to the Office of Private Education in December 1980. Senske, who had been Secretary of Schools of the Missouri Synod, was now Assistant Secretary for Private Education in the United States Department of Education. In an article written in 1981 he reiterated the traditional concerns of the Missouri Synod concerning public aid to private education:

We must continue to

be concerned about the *terms* under which the aid is provided, the controls that may be imposed (especially if they may be other than mere accountability), and also be concerned about the possible future problem of *maintaining support* of the goals and activities of the government program, if necessary, should that aid be discontinued. Three major rights must not be surrendered. The first is the *employment of teachers of our choice*. Secondly, the *maintenance of admission policies*, where desired by *church-related* schools, that grant priority to children of the church's members who operate the schools. However, all admissions

The Synod continues to be wary of any type of support to parochial schools that may impinge upon the independence of schools to make personnel and curricular decisions appropriate to the dictates that the faith requires. . . [But], it appears that a voucher system that would provide funds to parents to use as they see fit would not pose theological questions for the Missouri Synod.



policies must be within civil rights compliance. Thirdly, we must *maintain our philosophy, our purpose, our religious orientation* of our schools (p. 223).

In 1982 Kell reported that Lutheran schools were costly investments (p. 14). While efficiently operated at about half the public school rates, elementary schools had experienced a steady rise in per pupil costs to a reported \$888 in 1981. While averaging about an eight per cent increase during several previous years, per pupil costs had increased 25 per cent over the previous ten years. According to Kell, while congregations continued to provide almost two-thirds of the costs of operating their elementary schools in addition to most of the capital investments, a steadily increasing dependence on tuition, including assessments to member parents, had developed. Third-source funding, while being explored, was relatively insignificant and unchanged.

## **Conclusion**

Through the years, the Missouri Synod came to take the “ideal” position that support of elementary parochial education is the responsibility of all the members of the sponsoring congregation and that tuition should *not* be charged to parish members. The parishes, on the other hand, practiced the ideal position as long as it was feasible to do so, but, as time went on, succumbed to the practical necessity of charging tuition to congregation members in order to balance the financial costs of the entire program of the parish.

Currently, the trend is growing for elementary parochial schools to be supported primarily by tuition rather than primarily by the congregation’s budget. Congregation members are likely to be expected to pay tuition, if only a token amount. Virtually all schools charge tuition for the education of non-members’ children. Early childhood centers and Lutheran high schools always have tended to charge tuition for all pupils.

In terms of government funding for parochial schools, the Synod continues to be wary of any type of support to parochial schools that may impinge upon the independence of schools to make personnel and curricular decisions appropriate to the dictates that the faith requires. Aid to the parents of school children for whatever purposes the level of government determines as appropriate is not suspect because it is provided to families to use as they see fit rather than to the educational agency, which may be impacted by overt to subtle forms of government expectations. Therefore, it appears that a voucher system that would provide funds to parents to use as they see fit would not pose theological questions for the Missouri Synod.†

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“It would be only right and proper that for every gulden you gave for the war against the Turks, you should give 100 guildens for the schools, even if they [the Turks] were already at our throats, so that you might be able to educate at least one boy with this sum so that he would become a true Christian.”

Martin Luther

## Equitable Funding for All School Children

*Douglas Delaney has served as a registered lobbyist for over 15 years. He is presently the Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois. He was instrumental in designing and getting passed a significant school choice law in Illinois.*

In the United States, Lutherans and Catholics have a number of opportunities for dialogue and collaboration on public policy. One of these opportunities is educational choice. Heritage common to Lutherans and Catholics supports educational choice advocacy.

### Catholic Positions

Several teachings of the Catholic Church are relevant to educational choice. They include access to an education as a human right, the right of parents to be primary educators of their children, the right of the Church to have a role in education, the responsibility of government to protect the rights of its people, and a preferential option for the poor.

Catholic teaching certainly includes access to quality education among human rights. This is stated in the 1963 encyclical of Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, which posits that "Parents . . . have a prior right in the support and education of their children." Further, with respect to parental rights, the 1965 *Declaration on Christian Education* from the Second

Vatican Council proclaimed, "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children."

The 1990 Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, *In Support of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, expressed the following:

Recognizing that Catholic schools are a significant part of education in the United States, we call on all citizens to join with us in supporting federal and state legislative efforts to provide financial assistance to all parents that will ensure that they can afford to choose the type of schooling they desire for their children. For our part, we are so convinced that the Catholic community needs to enter seriously into both national and state educational discussions that we are taking immediate steps to educate all citizens of the United States about the importance of assuring that all parents have a meaningful choice of schools . . . We support and encourage the formation of diocesan, state, and national organizations of Catholic school parents . . .

## Lutheran Viewpoints

While the Lutheran Church does not have the same kind of binding central teaching authority as the Catholic Church, there still may be found some congeniality with Catholic positions among some Lutheran points of view. For example, the Division for Church and Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) formed a social policy resolution in 2000 to guide public policy advocacy on school vouchers. The background paper from the Division proposed elements gathered from predecessor church bodies and meriting general agreement among a number of Lutherans. These included:

- ▶ the recognition of the vital importance of good education for all;
- ▶ the consideration of education as a fundamental right;
- ▶ the acknowledgment that all are entitled to equal access to the opportunities and resources of a society;
- ▶ the demonstration of special concern that public policy benefit people who are poor and vulnerable; and
- ▶ the insistence that parents, church, and government have responsibilities for educating children and youth.

These Lutheran positions do share a common vision with Catholic teaching and, one might argue, could logically lead to advocacy for state support for school choice. In fact, in 1983, the then American Lutheran Church adopted a statement of comment and counsel entitled *Tax Credits for Private School Tuition Payments*. The statement

was formulated in opposition to a federal tax credit bill because the proposed legislation would do too much for the wealthy and too little for the poor. However, the statement also expressed optimism that in principle an adequate tax credit bill could be designed, for example, one that made “the credit also available as a direct payment to those families too poor to pay enough federal taxes to gain the credit directly.”

### **Differing Perspectives**

While Catholic and Lutheran positions on education are sometimes similar, they also can differ from other viewpoints commonly held in the United States. For example, there is little support in our society or, for that matter, in the United States Constitution for regarding education as a human right.

Also, far from making it a preferential option for the poor, education in this country is often treated as a commodity available to those who can afford it. Public education at the primary and secondary levels is funded chiefly by property taxes, which often results in financial inequities between more

affluent school districts and those that possess less of a tax base.

A third area of differing view points between Catholics and some Lutheran denominations and the larger society is that in our civil order there is no assumption that government has a responsibility to fund or assist non-public education, especially if it is religiously based. The United States Constitution, when interpreted in terms of the so-called doctrine of the “separation of church and state,” places a burden on those seeking any government financial support for religiously based non-public schools. Some state constitutions are quite explicit in their antiestablishment provisions. The Constitution of the State of Illinois (Article I, §3), for example, is unambiguous in stating that

There is little support in our society or, for that matter, in the United States Constitution for regarding education as a human right. Also, far from making it a preferential option for the poor, education in this country is often treated as a commodity available to those who can afford it.

Neither the General Assembly nor any county, city, town, township, school

district, or other public corporation, shall ever make any appropriation or pay from any public fund whatever, anything in aid of any church or sectarian purpose, or to help support or sustain any school, academy, seminary, college, university, or other literary or scientific institution, controlled by any church or sectarian denomination whatever; nor shall any grant or donation of land, money, or other personal property ever be made by the state, or any such public corporation, to any church, or for any sectarian purpose.

The Missouri and Oregon Constitutions are equally definitive in this regard.

Nevertheless, neither states nor the nation as a whole ever considered that there needed be an absolute wall of separation between government and church or church-related schools. Tax deductions for religious purposes are allowed. Police and fire services are rendered to churches and religious schools. Denominational colleges are not excluded from government-based student loans. And the government regards attendance at church based non-public schools as fulfillment of state-mandated compulsory school attendance laws.

A final differing viewpoint emanates from opponents of public funding for nonpublic school choice, i.e., the ACLU and public school teachers' unions. These organizations have promoted, with some success, the idea that school funding is a zero sum game, i.e., providing funds to one school means that another school is deprived.

In a pluralistic society such as the United States, church bodies (including Catholics and Lutherans) see church based non-public schools as essential to their mission. This is so even though both Catholics and Lutherans support public schools in principle and through payment of taxes. Interestingly, Martin Luther is considered instrumental in the founding of universal public education. It was Luther who called upon public authority to assume responsibility for schooling, using either taxes or monastic endowments. He also demanded that all children, rich or poor, boys or girls, were to be given access to education. And, finally, it was Luther who also advocated compulsory school attendance.

## Choice

In 1999, Catholic Bishops in *Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium*, stipulated that,

All persons, by virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to receive a quality education. We must ensure that our nation's young people, especially the poor and most vulnerable, are properly prepared to be good citizens, to lead productive lives, and to be socially and morally responsible in the

## *Equitable Funding for All School Children*

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complicated and technologically advanced world of the twenty-first century . . . We support initiatives that provide adequate funding to educate all children no matter what school they attend . . .

The ultimate in school choice would be to provide full cost vouchers to parents and let them choose the best school for their child. Supporters of vouchers have fought long and hard for parents' rights in education. A voucher would allow parents to send their child to any non-public or public school. Unfortunately, those opposing school choice have been much more effective in the legislative arena. The fight for full choice in education will certainly continue. However, the strategy to gain financial support for non-public schools has changed somewhat in recent history. An alternative solution has gained momentum in state legislatures. The legislative initiatives that have been successful have stressed assistance to the students and their parents, not direct benefits to the institution. Illinois is one example.

### **An Alternative**

Because parents in Illinois have become politically active and demanded some financial assistance, students attending non-public schools are receiving some government

While the right of parents to choose schools for their children may be affirmed by Church and society and recognized as constitutional in the United States, state support for the actual exercise of that right is an issue not yet completely settled.

financial support for education. Expenses for textbooks, transportation, and education tax credits are reimbursable from the state.

Non-public school parents and interested citizens in Illinois initiated a grassroots effort to pass legislation that would financially assist non-public school parents. More than 20,000 letters were sent to legislators, demanding passage of the Illinois Education Tax Credit. As a result, there is an educational income tax credit that provides Illinois parents some financial relief (up to \$500 per family). The act was signed into law in 1999. Coupled with the letters and thousands of phone calls, the following information was used to argue for the passage of the tax credit legislation:

- ▶ Billions of dollars were being provided in the form of tax abatements and tax credits in the state of Illinois. For example, below is the 1996 abatement list:  
\$144 million - farm chemical tax break



\$142 million - corporate income tax rebate

\$112 million - manufacturers' machinery tax credit

\$ 82 million - retailers discount

\$384 million - business expenses for research, development and training

\$190 million - corporate income tax rebate

- ▶ School appropriations were increasing. In 1996, \$197 million of new money was appropriated for education; in 1997, \$287 million of new money was appropriated; and, in 1998, \$343 million of new money was appropriated. This was an \$827 million increase in new money appropriated for public education over those three years.
- ▶ The Illinois Education Tax Credit would provide a modest tax break for parents who provide funding for 310,000 non-public school students in Illinois. If tax credits are issued for manufacturers and businesses, why not issue a tax credit for school parents?
- ▶ The average cost of educating a student in the state of Illinois was \$6,400. Therefore, the 310,000 students enrolled in nonpublic schools saved state and local taxpayers \$1.9 billion annually. Of the \$6,400 spent, an average of \$3,100 is provided through *state funding*—amounting to \$960 million annually.

As of October 2001, the Education Tax Credit has benefitted more than 155,000 families in Illinois. Nearly \$56 million has been refunded to Illinois families to help pay for education expenses. Table 1 illustrates current benefits available to Illinois non-public school students and parents.

While the right of parents to choose schools for their children may be affirmed by Church and society and recognized as constitutional in the United States, state support for the actual exercise of that right is an issue not yet completely settled. It is

especially controversial when it concerns state financial support to non-public schools affiliated with religious bodies. Nevertheless, the United States Supreme Court has on several occasions upheld some forms of state financial support even for

**Table 1: Total Funding for Non-public school parents and students (not schools) FY2001**

Textbooks	\$ 4.5 million
Transportation	\$12 million
Tax Credit	\$70 million
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>\$86.5 million</b>

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religious schools.

### Case Law

In Louisiana, the state purchase and supply of nonsectarian textbooks for parochial school children was upheld in 1930 in the case of *Cochran v. Louisiana State Board of Education*. The lending of textbooks free of charge to all students in grades seven through twelve in New York, including those in parochial schools, was upheld in 1968 in *Board of Education v. Allen*. A New Jersey program of tax-supported school bus transportation that included parochial school students was upheld in 1947 in *Everson v. Board of Education*.

The Supreme Court has upheld other forms of state financial support on behalf of students in religiously affiliated non-public schools. Programs supported include diagnostic and therapeutic services (*Woolman v. Walter*, 1977), sign language interpretation (*Zorbest v. Catalina Foothills School District*, 1993), and remedial education assistance (*Agostini v. Felton*, 1997).

Several lawsuits have been filed against the Education Tax Credit in Illinois. The law has been upheld in the state's Circuit and Appellate Courts. The Illinois Supreme Court refused to hear the case, thereby allowing the lower courts' decisions to stand.

On June 28, 2000, in a six to three vote, the United States Supreme Court in *Mitchell v. Helms* held that providing computers, library and media materials, and other instructional materials to students in private, religious schools under Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) did not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

It appears clear, then, that assistance to non-public school students and parents is constitutional. The need now is to work diligently at passing meaningful legislation at the state and federal levels. There must be a strong resolve on the part of parents and church members to make equitable funding for education a priority.

The United States Supreme Court will also be addressing the issue of vouchers. The court has already heard arguments for and against a six-year-old voucher program involving 3,700 children in Cleveland, Ohio. These vouchers allow parents to receive up to \$2,500 in government subsidies to pay tuition costs at non-public religious schools. The decision in this case, expected in May, 2002, will have an enormous impact on the fight for equitable funding in education.

The Catholic Church has always supported equitable funding for all students. A majority of Catholic children attend public schools. In Illinois, the Catholic Bishops most recently supported a funding plan to rely less on real estate taxes, thus making

quality education available to all students. While the Catholic community has been active in supporting education funding for all students, the public school establishment, unfortunately, has not reciprocated in any way. In fact, there has been vehement opposition to any proposed legislation that would assist *all* students equally.

In September of 1995, in *Principles for Educational Reform in the United States*, the United States Catholic Conference Committee on Education offered the following statement:

We wish to make one thing absolutely clear, our concern for educational reform does not limit itself to what happens in Catholic schools. We have a sincere concern for what happens to all children, including those enrolled in public and private schools as well. We have a deep concern that all children will be provided with a means to attain productive lives, and be socially and morally responsible. In addition, educational reform efforts will impact on the professional lives of all educators, whether they work in public, private, or religious schools, and we seek to address their needs and concerns . . .

At present, the Catholic Conference of Illinois is an active member of the Illinois Coalition of Non-Public Schools. This organization includes representatives of Lutheran, Jewish, Catholic, Montessori, Seventh-Day Adventist, Home Schools, Islamic, Christian Schools International, and other private schools. The issue of receiving equitable funding for all of Illinois' school children, as well as children in other states, is much broader than Catholic or Lutheran interests. As with any effort, a broad-based coalition is necessary to achieve goals.

These efforts must rely on a deep and fundamental reality. There must be a general societal consensus on behalf of education as an inalienable, universal human right and a consensus that government has a role to play in the active defense of human rights by means including financial support. There must also be a general societal consensus on the rights and responsibilities of parents. Parental choice must be an integral part of true educational reform that aims at giving all people a quality education regardless of their financial resources. The common good demands nothing less.✧

## Milwaukee's Parental Choice for Schools Program: A Lutheran Educator's Experience and Perspective

*Duane Miller has served in the Milwaukee area for eight years. He presently teaches at St. Martini Lutheran School, a "choice school" on the city's south side. He has been involved with the Milwaukee Parental School Choice program since it expanded to include parochial schools and has advised various groups that are working with or considering school vouchers. A graduate of Concordia, Seward, NE, he received his MA from Miami University, OH.*

**W**hy do you have your child in a Lutheran school? The question seems simple enough until coupled with this question: Should every child have the chance to attend a Lutheran school? For some families, the desire to send their child to the Lutheran school exists, but the means to do so does not. Government-funded vouchers would enable those families who wish to enroll their children, but who cannot afford the tuition, to attend a Lutheran school.

The concept of providing government funds to support schools that teach religion is not a new idea. It had been a widespread and accepted practice until fears of Catholic parochial influence in the nineteenth century prompted state legislatures to pass laws abrogating such funding. Since the 1960s, there has been a strong movement to provide government funds directly or indirectly to the support of parochial schools.

## **The Legislation**

In the spring of 1990, Wisconsin passed a law to provide parochial school funding by means of vouchers or checks sent directly to the school to be endorsed by the parents of children attending. The intent of the law was to allow families who could not afford to send their children to a parochial school (families at 175% of federal poverty guidelines or having an income of \$25,500 per year for a family of three) to have the same option available to them that wealthy families possessed. In a sense, the law was an attempt to remove a barrier of discrimination between economic classes. Milwaukee was chosen by the Wisconsin legislature as the proving ground for implementing the proposed legislation, because the city had experienced the greatest decline in educational test scores and the largest concentration of families living close to or below the federal poverty guidelines. And thus began the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

Although originating as a bipartisan measure, the program soon became a political issue. The Milwaukee teacher's union and the American Civil Liberties Union, among other groups, joined together to fight the program and put pressure on the legislators to repeal the bill. Since its inception, the program has provided both blessings and burdens to the schools involved.

Prior to the initiation of the MPCP, as is the situation in many regions of the country, a number of parochial schools in Milwaukee were struggling with financial burdens. As is also the case in other areas of the United States, in Milwaukee's central city, declining membership in the churches and the poverty-level incomes of families who joined the congregation exacerbated the struggle. Added to these dilemmas was the great need to provide the ministry of the Gospel to the people of the central city. Lutheran schools provide a major connection with families and offer Christian values where they are so desperately needed. In Milwaukee, financial exigency had caused several schools to close as neighborhoods became populated primarily with people living in poverty. Due to the demise of these schools, the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children was lost.

## **Blessings, Difficulties, and Challenges**

The MPCP has breathed new life into the schools of Milwaukee and new hope for the families served. In the years the program has been in existence, more than 10,000 children have received vouchers enabling them to attend schools their parents hope can make a difference in their lives. For Lutheran schools, the program has provided new blessings as enrollments have increased and schools that were struggling to help families afford the tuition now find their classrooms filled and receiving full-cost

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tuition payments.

Along with these blessings have also come difficulties. The needs of the students are often more acute than those of the students previously served by these Lutheran schools, causing greater stress and a need for additional services such as counseling, developmental classes, and discipline referral. Students coming from other area schools, especially those entering the middle school grades, often do not have the organizational skills that are typically expected. Parents working long hours at low paying jobs simply do not always have the time and sometimes the ability to help their child with schoolwork.

Political difficulties are also present. Because of the opposition to the program, support needs to be provided to the political process and for the efforts of lobby groups who work to keep the program and prevent government regulation. Specific guidelines must be followed to insure that participating schools have complied with the requirements. All staff must be wary of phone calls and contacts for information to ensure that no incorrect information is given that could jeopardize the program.

**Allowing parents to select the school they want their child to attend appears to be bearing fruit, effecting change in the cycle of poverty and despair.**

The opponents of the MPCP have worked hard to discourage those involved in the program. Their most recent efforts have focused on reducing

the funding that parents receive to give to the schools their children attend. This change in the law would leave parents unable to pay the costs of sending their child to the school and therefore the school would either have to assume the additional costs or turn the child(ren) away. Since these participating schools were already in financial difficulty, assuming the added costs would be impossible. The result would effectively kill the MPCP. When the legislature amended the legislation in June, 1995 to allow religious schools to enter the program (upheld in a Wisconsin Supreme Court decision on June 10, 1998), wording was included that no laws should be passed that would produce "excessive entanglement" between the parochial schools and the state. This wording has helped to prevent additional mandates that might erode the distinctive nature of participating Lutheran schools, thereby making it difficult or impossible for them to be a party to the program. There is no question that opponents will continue to attack school voucher programs nationwide, and they may

eventually stall or even suspend the program in Milwaukee. However, with each passing year, fresh results are produced to support the effectiveness of the Lutheran schools involved.

According to research conducted by John F. Witte, Troy D. Sterr, and Christopher A. Thorn (1995), *Fifth Year Report: Milwaukee Parental Choice Program*, parental participants love the MPCP. This translates into more satisfaction with the schools they have chosen and therefore more participation in their child's education. In a follow up study (1996), *The Effectiveness of School Choice in Milwaukee*, Jay P. Greene, Paul E. Peterson, and Jiangtao Du, et al., found that after four years involvement in the MPCP, students made educational gains in both reading and mathematics. Both studies are testimony to the dedication and effectiveness of participating schools. Allowing parents to select the school they want their child to attend appears to be bearing fruit, effecting change in the cycle of poverty and despair.

The rewards for families participating in the MPCP have been significant. During the first year of my involvement in the program, several families indicated to me that they had previously considered sending their children to a Lutheran school, but the tuition had been prohibitive, even with the financial assistance that was extended. Here were children and families who were in the neighborhood and were not being reached. They did not have the same opportunities to select the school for their children that middle and upper class families enjoyed. Their own lack of education was leading to their children's lack of education and keeping them from attending a Lutheran school. Their lack of financial resources also prevented their attendance and kept them from hearing the message of salvation taught daily in the classroom. The MPCP allowed these families to fulfill their dream of sending their child to a parochial school. For some, the parochial school meant safety, for others it meant a more challenging curriculum, and for others it meant religious education.

Whatever the reason a parent sends their child to a Lutheran school, it is essential for that school to make every effort to fulfill the Great Commission. With the added responsibilities required by the MPCP and concomitant challenges presented by the new student population, difficulties developed in working with parents in an organized way so as to encourage them to join the church. The experience made evident the need to initiate a conscious effort to bring these newly enrolled MPCP families into the church through the school. Many families either did not have a church home, or rarely attended the church listed as their home church. The Lord had put these families into the building, and we needed do more to welcome them to the Savior. A Director of Christian Education was called to serve as a leader of outreach

## *School Choice: A Lutheran Educator's Experience*

efforts through the school. The goal was to provide leadership to the congregation and staff to welcome the children and through them their parents into the fellowship of the church. Although in its early stages, the effort has shown great promise in building a bridge between the school and the church.

For Lutheran schools, this may be the greatest challenge of a voucher program. Without the efforts to welcome families through the school, the Lutheran school is in danger of becoming a private school offering safety to families afraid to send their children to the public schools. While Lutheran schools certainly should provide a safe environment and also equip children to overcome obstacles resulting from lower socioeconomic status, they must also continue to strive to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **One Child's Story**

For those readers who are fearful of supporting vouchers to parochial schools, my admonishment

would be to be more fearful of what is being lost if families living in poverty cannot be reached. During this past year, the school I served enrolled a young girl into the eighth grade. She presented a difficult challenge, often arguing with the teachers and me and resisting any authority. She even told me of how

For Lutheran schools, this may be the greatest challenge of a voucher program. Without the efforts to welcome families through the school, the Lutheran school is in danger of becoming a private school offering safety to families afraid to send their children to the public schools.

she would be out after curfew and when police stopped her, they not only recognized her, but she would also argue and resist them. During the school year, she missed a half-day because a court case she was involved in came up. Upon returning to school midday, she requested community service hours she could perform at the school, which gave indication that the charges against her were serious. At the end of the school year, each eighth grader was asked to write a will and to include in it some items they would leave behind for the next class. Instead of a will, she chose to write a statement of how she had changed through the efforts of the school staff to work



with her and their attitude of not giving up on her. She wrote: "I leave with you a message for everyone: Good-bye to everyone at Mt. Calvary and thank you for this eighth grade year. I have had times when I didn't want to do my work, but I wanted to come to school. I learned when it all came down; I wasn't hurting anyone but myself. I learned so much this year, including to have a positive attitude and only I could make that change. You will have good days and bad days, but keep on going with your head held high and your heart full of love."

School choice is working when it reaches children like the aforementioned who otherwise might be lost to a life of confronting law enforcement officials and ultimately prison. Government dollars are well spent in prevention through providing choice in education. Lutheran educators need to study this issue and encourage others to do the same. God is offering opportunity and we must be prepared to recognize and utilize it. Families may choose to send their children to a Lutheran school for a wide variety of reasons, but while they are with us, we will share a Christ who cares for them and gave himself for their salvation.†

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## A Survey of Voucher Objections

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*"As C. S. Lewis remarked, the modern world keeps trying to make religion a purely private matter while constantly reducing the areas of privacy that are left to us. If we treasure our liberty, we must keep the minds of our children free from the power of the state." (Sobran, 1997)*

Having served as a teacher and administrator in both public and parochial schools, I recognize that there is no real consensus on what it means to "improve" education. The issue can fade into meaninglessness if we fail to define the "education" we have in mind. In public debate, education is usually equated with a system of schools, a doubtful equation. The idea of "improvement" is similarly a moving target depending on what school-related problems enter the public consciousness. As educators and policy makers attempt to persuade us on the merits of this or that proposal, there is a temptation to speak only of the expected benefits and to ignore the possible costs.

Take student assessment as an example: switching from traditional letter grades to portfolios makes each individual's assessment much more meaningful, but makes aggregate assessments impracticable. Nine annual portfolios is a lot to ship to a high school requesting records!

School vouchers, along with other measures such as the tuition tax credit and charter schools, are advocated in many circles, including our circle of Lutheran school educators. Vouchers are said to facilitate school choice, which, in turn, is expected to improve education by harnessing market forces. Parents will be able to choose our schools, which will cause public schools to compete and improve; furthermore, the voucher subsidy received by our own schools will enable improvements, notably in salaries and teacher longevity. However, before the concept carries us away, a survey of objections to the voucher concept (and by extension, to other forms of school choice) is in order. We may wish to qualify our support as the implied trade-offs come to light.

## **I. "Rhetorical" Objections**

The most common objections to vouchers are what I'd classify as "rhetorical," i.e., they sound good on the surface and are meant to

spur the true believers (in the public school system) to action. These should be examined, if for no other reason so that we can engage in a thoughtful discussion, rather than a shouting match. One example is a website list of "Talking Points" distributed by Rethinking Schools (1998), an organization of Milwaukee teachers set up to oppose that city's voucher experiment. Similar lists appear on websites of People for the American Way, National Education Association, and others supportive of the public school lobby. Let us consider what is implied in some of their objections.

However, before the concept carries us away, a survey of objections to the voucher concept (and by extension, to other forms of school choice) is in order. We may wish to qualify our support as the implied trade-offs come to light.

### **A. The "Parochial" Perspective of the Public School**

We may approach the issue with the "parochial" mindset, convinced that "our"

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institution's approach to education is the best, and whatever allows our institution to serve more students is best overall. We then take the stance that those that choose contrariwise are alone responsible for their choice, and deserve no attention, much less support, financial or otherwise. In contrast is the "civic-minded" approach. It is willing to sacrifice one's own interests in view of the common good, to recognize that policies may benefit others more than our own. One could advocate vouchers simply on the grounds of (corporate) self-interest while neglecting the issue of the common good. I believe that one could confess ignorance as to what the common good requires while being clear on one's self-interest. But few of us have such humility, and we insist on paying lip service to the common good, if only by identifying it exclusively with our own self-interest. The costs, especially to other interested parties, is neglected or denied.

Ironically, it is such a "parochial" viewpoint that dominates the most popular and widespread objection to vouchers. Rethinking Schools' website (1998 and hereafter referred to as "Rethinking") says, "Vouchers are a diversion" from real issues like class size, teacher training, outdated buildings, etc. That these are equally issues for students attending schools outside the traditional public school system is not acknowledged. The callous disregard for these students outside the public school system is striking. Rethinking says, "Vouchers siphon off money needed by public schools," and that "Vouchers can cream off 'desirable' students." These arguments imply the fragile state of public schools, and are a striking confirmation of many of the criticisms of the present system of public schooling.

### **B. Name-Calling**

Unfortunately, some of the objections to vouchers descend to mere name-calling. Rethinking (1998) says, "Vouchers stand in opposition to our democratic vision... Democracy, at its heart, is about working together for what is best for all children." This is a remarkable piece of question-begging sentimentality. It redefines democracy and simply resorts to name-calling. Another example is, "Vouchers violate separation of church and state." It is remarkable that instead of substantiating a real legal objection, Rethinking cites Bosnia and the Middle East as examples. The tactic is guilt by association. In a similar vein, Rethinking (1998) says, "Voucher schools may increase segregation." Non-public schools in inner city and ring suburbs tend to be more integrated than their neighborhood schools, primarily due to greater confidence of safety and responsiveness. In a 1994 study in *Money* magazine, Topolnicki found that elite suburban high schools were the most segregated schools in America (p. 98). Arguably, by breaking the neighborhood/school connection, school choice would

enable more neighborhoods to integrate. I myself live in Detroit and my children have attended both public and non-public schools, while my wife and I have taught in both public and parochial schools. While my children have always been in the minority, their non-public schools were much more integrated than the public schools they attended.

Rethinking (1998) says, "Vouchers are about privatization, not opportunity . . . part of the right-wing attack on public institutions." Again, there is a valid objection concealed behind the rhetoric. Are private institutions superior to public institutions for education? The issue deserves to be explored, not foreclosed as Rethinking does. In yet another example, Rethinking (1998) says, "Private schools do not have to respect the constitutional rights of students." This is a lie; nonpublic schools do have to respect constitutional rights of students. However, the constitution guarantees different rights to students in different settings. In the public school where the child is required by law to attend, the student has some rights of self-expression, privacy, and freedom from religious influence that may be voluntarily yielded in exchange for the benefits of nonpublic education, spelled out in the private contract made in enrollment. To oversimplify, the public school tends to be viewed constitutionally as an agent of the state, while the nonpublic school is viewed as an agent of the parent(s).

### **C. Social Theory**

Some of the objections to vouchers are based on a real difference of social theory, whether of economics, or of political rights. Privatization and the church/state separation issues have been mentioned above. In another objection, Rethinking (1998) says, "Vouchers are taxation without representation" because taxpayers have no say in how the private schools are run. However, resident aliens, corporations, and others who pay taxes without benefit of voting for the local school board may be said to suffer a lack of representation. Furthermore, many, if not most, of the parents of the children attending nonpublic schools are taxpayers; they often choose nonpublic schools because they are more responsive to their concerns than the public school bureaucracy. Another of the Rethinking (1998) objections is that "Vouchers are based on the marketplace, not the public good." Advocates of vouchers believe the marketplace will serve the public good; this is a valid question that requires further consideration.

Such shallow rhetorical arguments are intended to provoke us into unthinking reaction along the lines of our prejudices, both for and against vouchers. They are masks for the self-interest of the educational establishment. Alas, this is how many

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elections are won. It should warn us against thinking (still less speaking) of the school choice issue in similarly shallow terms, masking our self-interest. Nor should we allow the weak case made by public school advocates to blind us to the implication of vouchers for our Lutheran schools.

### **II. Libertarian Objections**

From an opposite perspective comes another set of objections to the school choice/voucher concept. The Alliance for the Separation of Church and State hosts a website, annual conference, and journal (*School Liberator*) that advocate rolling back state involvement in education. While this organization disclaims any relationship to political parties, it is clearly libertarian in its philosophical orientation. Four objections authored by Marshall Fritz (2002) with my analysis follow:

1. “Vouchers spread the dependency attitude to independent families currently paying for their children’s education.”

Oddly, the same essay advocates privately funded vouchers, suggesting that it is acceptable for families to be dependent upon private donors; and church sponsored schools encourage what we would regard as a healthy inter-dependency in religious communities. This seems a weak objection. Perhaps the stronger objection is the dependence of the private school, rather than the family, on government money, an argument advanced elsewhere on the Alliance website, and related to #3 and #4 below.

2. “Vouchers obscure the difference between parents who are willing to sacrifice to send their children to a private school from those who are unwilling to sacrifice. This means private schools will lower their standards of who gets in.”

There may be more to this objection than first meets the eye. Is its stakeholders’ willingness to sacrifice an essential element of the parochial school’s success or identity? If the institution under discussion were a church rather than a private school, many of us would immediately recognize the applicability of this argument. Furthermore, if peer influence is an essential aspect of any school, the matter of “lower . . . standards of who gets in” cannot be lightly dismissed, either. The standard in question, it must be understood, is commitment to the school’s values.

3. “By creating a flow of money from the state to private schools, vouchers pave a

wide road for additional regulations and controls. 'When you reach for the money is when they slip on the handcuffs.' A common control is to require voucher-redeeming schools to administer standardized tests. These tests, in effect, dictate the curriculum, as the private schools do not wish to have lower test scores than the 'public' schools."

The Supreme Court, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), established the parent's right to send children to private schools, but at the same time acknowledged the state's right in regulating such schools. Therefore, the example given by the essay, required standardized tests, seems to me a weak example. If the state's interest in schooling is that certain skills and knowledge be taught, an objective test which allows blind comparison of students with others nation- (or state-) wide seems to me to be the most appropriate form of accountability. This leaves the choice of methods, additional educational objectives, and structuring, to the local school. Before statewide testing, for example, Michigan required so many days and hours of instruction, broken down by subjects, taught by state licensed teachers, etc. This represents so much more state regulation, even micro-management, of how the school should approach its work. Its heritage is the avalanche of paperwork which is intended to guarantee accountability, but may encourage an easy approach to reporting because the more forms to file, the harder it is to audit them. In fact, paperwork requirements may constitute one of the "handcuffs" for institutions receiving government money.

4. "Other than expensive prep schools, private and religious schools that refuse to accept the voucher will lose a significant number of their students to voucher-redeeming schools. Many will face the choice of accepting the voucher and its controls or going out of business."

This objection to vouchers reminds us that our own schools will not necessarily be winners in the free marketplace. Vouchers will constitute an influence on the education market, an influence determined by courts and legislatures exerted directly upon the schools accepting them, and indirectly on the schools declining them. Something may be learned from the evolution of American higher education where programs to assist private institutions, and students at private institutions, have had the effect of homogenizing the landscape. Rare is the Grove City College or Hillsdale that charts a course independent of government regulation.

### **III. Choice Locus Objections**

David Tyack (1999) makes a thoughtful critique of the voucher/school choice idea by questioning the locus of choice. The debate over school choice has been conducted as if historical amnesia were a virtue, he complains, and argues that individual choice in education is contrary to the traditions of both public and parochial schools in America.

#### **A. Collective Choice**

In the religious community no less than in the civic community, the responsibility for schooling was not an exclusive concern of parents, but of the entire community. "For that reason," writes Tyack (1999), "choices about education should be collective . . . Communities . . . retained the power to make collective choices about who would teach, how much schools would cost, and what kind of instruction to offer. If people disagreed with school trustees, they could—and often did—elect others" (p. 1).

One danger suggested by vouchers is that it may encourage the "shopper mentality" on the part of parents. Who in Lutheran schools has not met the parent who wishes not only to choose the school, but also (understandably) the teacher, the books, even the daily activities for his or her child? The ideology of choice implied to justify vouchers might undermine the commitment needed to make any educational program benefit the child. I might even suggest that the quality of a child's education is inversely proportionate to the sum of the parent's school choices.

Tyack (1999) recognizes this as a significant change from the self-understanding of the parochial school, Lutheran as well as Catholic: "Most religious schools have been organized around differences of conscience and character. Indeed, if attendance is dictated by religious duty, it may not be accurate to say that parents have felt free to choose their children's schools" (p. 2), any more than one could choose their family of origin. Religious schools have been the collective work of religious leaders and congregations, who have developed schools not to sell educational services but to inculcate their children in specific religious things." Of Lutheran schools, Tyack notes, "Lutherans . . . believed they could preserve the distinctiveness of their faith and the cohesion of the faithful by a 'guarded education.' In justifying their denominational schools they, too, used the language of duty and collective action more than individual choice . . . The commercial vision of education is a radical break, not just with public schooling, but even with the American tradition of private schooling" (p. 3).

#### **B. Curriculum Choice**



That market forces will not necessarily lead to improved education is demonstrated by what Tyack (1999) calls “the curriculum as marketplace.” He notes that conservative advocates of choice for parents generally decry the broad choice of offerings in the secondary curriculum (in the 1980's, more than 400 at some high schools). Tyack cites *A Nation at Risk*, the Reagan administration's influential report that decried education which stemmed from a “cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses” (p. 3).

If, in this case, choice can trivialize and adulterate learning, what guarantee is there that the choices encouraged by vouchers will turn out better? Will parents choose the schools that deliver “quality” (higher test scores?) and how will they know which ones to choose? Those from well-educated families would seem to have the edge in finding the appropriate schools while those with impoverished backgrounds would be less well equipped for these choices, and more vulnerable to educational quackery (Hooked on Phonics, anyone?).

This appears to be born out in one country where the voucher plan has been fully implemented. In 1980, Augusto Pinochet's regime adopted free-market principles for government services in Chile, including subsidizing private schools through vouchers. It is now a part of the landscape for the 15 million people of the narrow South American nation. After a shift of about 20% of students from municipal schools to private schools, little of the system is markedly changed. Keller (2001) reports, “Parents are not particularly informed about the quality of schools. Nor are they necessarily impressed by . . . small classes or high test scores. Many just want to send their kids to a school with slightly higher socioeconomic background than their own. Many would agree . . . that a choice system did not fundamentally transform Chilean education, as its partisans had hoped.”

Tyack's thesis that educational choice has been historically a collective rather than individual choice is an important caution for advocates of Lutheran schools. The ideology of individual choice that justifies vouchers is incongruent with the Lutheran school's traditional self-understanding as an institutional expression of the church community's faith.

## IV. Legal Objections

### A. The Lemon Test

In *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* (1971), the Supreme Court declared that government salary supplements for teachers of secular subjects in parochial schools violates the

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First Amendment's establishment clause. Furthermore, the *Lemon* Court set forth a three-part test to determine whether a government policy or activity violates the establishment clause: 1) the policy must be secular in purpose; 2) it's primary effect must neither advance nor inhibit religion; 3) the policy must not entangle government with religion. The effect of this decision for many years was to influence public schools to shun all contact with religion lest any accommodation be viewed as having a primary effect of advancing religion, and/or entangling the local school with religion. Some curbing, or even reversal, of this tendency is seen in more recent decisions, most recently by *Good News Club vs. Milford Central Schools* (U.S. Sup. Ct. 99-2036, 2001). The Court held that prohibiting a religious club to meet after school was a violation of first amendment free speech guarantees if the school creates a public forum through a policy of allowing community groups to use their facilities. Another significant decision was *Agostini vs. Felton* (1997) which reversed an earlier Supreme Court finding that Title I

services by public school teachers could not be rendered on the religious school site (Dowling-Sendor, 1999, p. 11).

As in most legal questions, the legality of vouchers depends on whose paradigm is governing the situation.

The ideology of individual choice that justifies vouchers is incongruent with the Lutheran school's traditional self-understanding as an institutional expression of the church community's faith.

Judges decide that

paradigm. A program in Milwaukee, the oldest in the nation, was upheld by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 1997. The opponents of vouchers argued that the voucher was not "really" given to the parents (permissible under law), but to the religious school (impermissible); and that the parent's act of endorsing the checks was just a conduit for this state support of religious schools. The United States Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of that case a year later. But the issue will no doubt be headed back to the high court.

Nor is Federal law the only relevant consideration. Many state constitutions, notably Wisconsin and Michigan's, have their own establishment clauses. A voucher plan that is acceptable in Federal courts may fail in state courts. A state judge in Florida ruled earlier that Governor Jeb Bush's voucher plan violated a portion of the state's constitution mandating state-funded public education. The most

important school voucher ruling so far has been in Cleveland, where 3,761 students are participating in a program that provides as much as \$2,500 in funding. Federal Court Judge Solomon Oliver, Jr. ruled in December of 1999 that the state voucher program in the city violated the Constitution because it mixed church and state. Judge Oliver concluded, "it can generally be said that a central part of each school's program is instruction in the theology or doctrine of a particular faith and that religion and religious doctrines are an integral part of the entire school experience" (Wilgoren, 1999, p. 2). The judge's opinion quoted handbooks from several of the schools receiving vouchers, including one of our Lutheran schools, which proclaimed that the purpose of their program was to teach the faith in the Lord Jesus. Funding to such a school obviously had a primary effect of advancing religion, the judge held.

Even if we disagree with Judge Solomon's reading of the situation and application of the law, the fact is that there are significant numbers of judges who view any significant support of parochial schools through vouchers as an impermissible breach of the Establishment clause. Until the Supreme Court gives an unequivocal ruling in favor of at least one form of voucher (which it might well do in deciding the appeal of Judge Oliver's decision later this spring), entities that attempt to implement them will be subject to legal challenge, the costs and uncertainties of which may outweigh the expected benefits.

## **B. Subversive/Coercive Influence**

However, the greatest threat to our Lutheran schools is not that vouchers may never be implemented; they may be implemented in a form which tempts our schools to subvert their mission. Are we ready to testify to Judge Solomon that religion is incidental to providing an education? Do we really wish to associate with those who seek to justify nativity scenes on public property on the grounds that they are not "religious," merely "historical?" Such tendencies already exist among us, and are even celebrated as if every change were for the better. An article in *Lutheran Education* (Jericho, 2000, p.250) describing developments in Australian Lutheran Schools reports "they have sought to move from simply being nurseries of the church to preserve the faith of the faithful to now being avenues of service and connection with the local community." The fact that many, if not most, mission statements of Missouri Synod Lutheran schools are focused on serving the student, rather than the Church, suggests how vulnerable we would be to the lure of vouchers with their invitation to become agents of the state for the education of citizens.

We must recognize that coercion, also, becomes a distinct possibility, should our schools accept the voucher. In 1976, the Office for Civil Rights demanded Form 639,

an “assurance of compliance,” from Grove City College, which included not only compliance with Title IX, but also all future amendments and bureaucratic interpretations of that title. When the college refused, the government went after, not the college, but the students. The then Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) threatened to stop the loans and grants to students unless the college complied formally, in writing, with the regulations. Grove City College maintained its position that it did not receive federal assistance. The loans and grants, it said, were agreements made between students and the government, and did not constitute federal aid to the school. After working its way to the Supreme Court, a decision was handed down. The high court held unanimously in *Grove City College v. Terrel H. Bell* (1983) that federal scholarship grants (Basic Educational Opportunity Grants) given to Grove City students were direct aid sufficient to trigger the provisions of Title IX and that HEW could terminate them if the college failed to comply with Title IX and its regulations. In a 6-3 split, the court did reject a lower court ruling that the entire college was the entity receiving aid, finding instead that only the programs receiving the funds (in this case, the office of financial aid) must comply with the Title IX regulations. Noted in the several opinions of the various courts that ruled on the case, was the fact that there was never a question of the college ever having discriminated.

As issues such as gay rights are seen in more and more circles as matters of civil rights, would schools accepting vouchers make themselves vulnerable to the threats of zealous bureaucracies? If vouchers were to fund the core activities of Lutheran schools, would the school be expected to comply, not only with existing civil rights regulations, but also with some only now proposed? And was it not to be free of such government interference in moral training that our schools exist?

## **V. Summary Conclusion**

The weakness of the popular arguments against vouchers should not blind us to more thoughtful critiques of the concept. I personally favor vouchers as a probable benefit to public school education, by making public schools more responsive to parents. But that gain may be marginal, at best, as the experience of Chile suggests. It is by no means a given that a voucher program benefitting Lutheran schools can survive all the court challenges sure to be brought against it. Were a voucher program to become effective, the resulting market shift in education would not necessarily be toward traditional parochial schools; quite as likely it might be away from ours and toward charter schools, other private schools, or even for-profit institutions developed for the new market (as in Chile). In that case, the new voucher market could

influence our Lutheran schools to modify their mission from teaching the faith, to simply teaching students. As agents of the state, they could fall victim to the government strings attached, which are yanked every time the issue of accountability arises in the public forum. True, some Lutheran schools might survive because of vouchers; vouchers might then be an aid to Lutheran schools, but not necessarily to Lutheran education. Taking our clue from C. S. Lewis, we ought to resist yielding this area of privacy, the Lutheran school, to the financial control of the state.†

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## A Lutheran School Responds to Homeschooling

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**C**hrist Our Savior Lutheran High School (COSLHS) in Evansville, Illinois is still a very young school. It is in its third year of operation and has only 31 students. Five of these students are part time and receive the majority of their education in their home. The families of these five students are active in their respective congregations. Only one of the families is Lutheran.

No one knows exactly how many children are being home educated currently in the United States today, but estimates indicate approximately 1.5 to 1.9 million students in kindergarten through grade twelve were home educated during the 2000–2001 school year (Ray, 2000).

### Questions

Homeschooling generates many questions: Are children really learning in this homeschool setting? Why are so many choosing to homeschool their children? And most importantly, at least for the purposes of this article, how does a Lutheran school respond to this movement?

As the Association of Christ Our Savior Lutheran High School shaped plans to open a new Lutheran high school, members of the Association raised the above questions and a number of additional pragmatic questions concerning homeschooling families. Association members were aware that children of some of the local pastors were being homeschooled. They also recognized the fact that a number of area families had left Lutheran schools to homeschool. Some had friends or neighbors in their local communities who homeschooled their children. Would parents who are homeschooling their children desire to send their child to a Lutheran high school? How did the Association feel toward those who, from their perspective, did not seem to value Lutheran education in the same way they did? What might these families want from us? Would home-schooled children be enrolled on a full time or part time basis? Should students be accepted on less than a full time basis? What if a family was going to use our high school just so their child could play sports? What should be the response of the Association? Quite obviously, these were difficult questions.

## **Negative Biases**

Today I serve as the principal of COSLHS, but during this initial planning period I was teaching at a nearby Lutheran elementary school and was just another member of the Association. I must admit how easily and insidiously Satan can work among us. One pastor's family decided to remove their children from the school and educate them at home. I became self-righteously indignant. Wasn't our school good enough?

The pastor's wife patiently tried to explain to me that they felt God gave parents the duty to educate their children. Finances also played a part, since they were not only paying tuition but also traveling a considerable distance to bring their children to school.

Unfortunately, I did not want to listen. I knew that this family was gifted intellectually. I knew that the mother had been educated as a Lutheran teacher. Consequently, I countered with the argument that their children needed the social interaction offered at the Lutheran elementary school. Once again she patiently explained to me how her children would receive that socialization, but I, once again, was not willing even to consider that it could be accomplished somewhere other than a Lutheran school, and perhaps just as effectively. I had my mind made up. A Lutheran education in a Lutheran school was the only real education those children ought to receive.

My purpose in sharing the above incident and the biases contained therein is that I realize those same biases are quite typical of many others, especially Lutheran educators. I've been privy to the conversations of other Lutheran schools' principals

and teachers as they unfavorably critique those who exercise their prerogative of choice. I have read comments on a Lutheran listserv that confirm that others also feel negatively, as I did, toward those who choose something different from our Lutheran schools.

We may deny this negativity, but as long as we harbor feelings of resentment toward those families who make decisions that we believe are not in a child's best interest, it is impossible to have the kind of relationship that will allow us to truly minister to them. In other words, the negativity becomes an obstacle to effective service.

## **Reaching Out**

A beginning place for any Lutheran school considering how to reach out to those currently involved in home education is to examine such negativity. Through my experience with homeschooling parents, I learned that I needed to confess my own tendency to want to play god, to decide what is right and wrong and what is best for everyone else. I needed to confess resentment, my superior attitude, and my unwillingness to let God do the leading. And just how do you feel toward those who choose to homeschool?

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As the Association's deliberations continued, the negativity abated and it became increasingly obvious that the membership was being led toward an understanding that all parties involved might benefit if COSLHS allowed homeschooled students to attend part time. After all, parents might not know enough to teach every high school subject, and we could be of assistance to them in this regard. Also, parents who were homeschooling might not have access to such things



as the chemicals used in a chemistry class. If COSLHS were open to allowing the home-schooled student to take one or more classes, seemingly both the family and the student would benefit. We certainly knew that the adolescent would receive an excellent education at our school.

And COSLHS would receive the benefit of the additional tuition dollars brought in by adding students to classrooms that we knew would not be full. Certainly, this would be of assistance financially. Then, again, by enrolling home-schooled children part time in our high school, perhaps some might enjoy their experience and decide to become full time students. And this is exactly what happened.

During the second year that homeschooled students were in attendance at COSLHS, one decided to take three classes instead of just one. Her younger brother will enter next year as a full-time freshman.

Again, everyone wins. One homeschooling parent offered to become the coach of our cross-country team. She possessed a great deal of experience. At their second meet, the team came in third, ahead of one of the competing public high schools that had fielded a cross-country team for many years. Another homeschooling family found a donor willing to pay for eighteen basketball uniforms.

Everyone wins. Just as in a congregation when members begin to share their enthusiasm with everyone willing to listen, one of the homeschool families affiliated with COSLHS started talking about everything they found pleasing. Soon we had three additional homeschool families enrolled.

This, then, is a second factor in considering a Lutheran school's relationship with those who homeschool—weigh the negatives and the benefits. When both the school and the families benefit, everyone indeed does win.

## **Issues**

In spite of above positives, as school administrator, I maintained a certain level of questioning skepticism. Just what kind of students would we get? Would they be in academic trouble? That was my suspicion. Would they be disciplinary problems? I didn't think so.

In addressing my skepticism, I discovered that more and more articles are being written and research is being conducted on those who are home educated. Regarding the growth of the movement, for example, Brad Wong wrote in the *Seattle Times* (June 15, 2001), "Since 1990, the number of Washington state students educated at home has nearly tripled, far higher than the rate of growth in public- and private-school enrollment combined, state statistics show." Many are turning to homeschooling in Washington and, also seemingly, around the country.

## *A Lutheran School Responds to Homeschooling*

In terms of the academic performance of home-schooled children, the recent news media coverage of the National Spelling Bee won by a student who had been homeschooled may be at least an illustrative indicator, if not compelling evidence, that such students can compete at a high level. Also in terms of academic achievement, a study done by Brian Ray (1997) for the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) found that home educated students excelled on nationally-normed standardized achievement exams. On average, homeschoolers outperformed their public school peers by 30 to 37 percentile points across all subjects. In a conventional school, the average Reading, Language, and Math score would be at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, but when homeschooled students were tested, their composite Reading score was the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile, their Language score was the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile, and their Math score was the 82<sup>nd</sup> percentile. In another study, reported in *Time* magazine, results were even higher. John Cloud and Jodie Morse (2001) reported that in 2000 the average homeschooler's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score was 1100, approximately 80 points higher than the average score for the general population.

For me, some additional questions still remained, however. Were my homeschool students "above average"? As I assessed the academic performance of the homeschool students at COSLHS, I found that four of the five did primarily A or B work. The fifth student had been removed from a Lutheran elementary school during fourth grade because the child was not succeeding. When I conferenced with the child's fourth grade teacher, I discovered that she had difficulty keeping pace with other students and had fallen behind. Her mother informed me that she chose to homeschool to try to "catch her up." After she began having difficulty completing work in our school, the mother indicated to me that her daughter had been tested and was found to have difficulty with sequencing. Thus, I learned that there was actually a medical condition causing some of her problems. I also learned that my general perception that parents cannot do as good a job as Lutheran teachers was perhaps not entirely accurate. Be that as it may, those students who were being homeschooled and also attending COSLHS seemed to be doing very well academically.

Perhaps a more important remaining concomitant and pragmatic question was whether or not I was willing to build the schedule in such a way as to meet a homeschooler's needs. It takes a great deal of time to work out the scheduling. Considering home-schooled students meant I needed to take several factors into account. When a student needed multiple classes, they needed to be scheduled back to back. When a sibling group was arriving, I needed to schedule their classes side by side. Also, I was asked to consider the homeschooling family's needs, meaning

their own teaching schedule. In one situation, the family wanted their child to have a class at the end of the day so he could stay for sports. In another case, the family wanted the student's classes to be in the morning to meet the transportation issues involved in scheduling teaching her other children. As a principal, I couldn't guarantee that I could satisfy everyone's needs. However, it was inherently obvious to those families that I was doing my best to accommodate their schedules. They were happy with that, and they felt the school cared.

My suspicions regarding the issue of discipline proved correct. The deportment of the home-schooled children at COSLHS was a non-issue. We did not experience any problems other than that the one student who was having difficulty sequencing was not completing her schoolwork on time.

Beyond the questions concerning academic performance and discipline, what about the issue of athletic competitions? In the early days of Association discussion, the question of sports had been raised. Would the Association allow future home educated children to come to our high school only for sports? Initially, the answer was clearly in the negative. Everyone seemed to agree that full time students who would attend COSLHS could possibly be penalized. In an obviously extreme scenario, perhaps none of the full time students would make the school team. Only non-attending students would play.

Evolving from this discussion came a more positive subsequent decision that all students who attended COSLHS, whether full time or part time, would be equally eligible to play sports. While it was recognized that someone might someday complain that his or her full time student was sitting on the bench while a part time student was playing, this was the policy that was going to be implemented

A concomitant issue had been raised at the same time. How much would part time students have to pay in terms of tuition? The Association made the decision to divide the tuition by the number of class periods in order to determine approximately how much a full time student would pay per class. The actual amount a part time student would pay was just slightly more than what a full time student would pay. It was then decided that an additional \$50 would be added as an administrative fee for the first class taken. The second and all succeeding classes would be the same price until a student reached the level where he/she was paying the full tuition. Finally, a registration fee was also to be paid. Part time students pay slightly over one-third of the cost for a full time student.

As this policy was being decided, everyone could more clearly see the financial benefit of having those students for even one class. Another interesting side note was that, after the school opened, it was a homeschool family who found a donor

willing to pay for eighteen basketball uniforms. Thus the high school benefited again.

## **Lessons Learned**

In my search to understand why families choose to homeschool, I came upon a study conducted by Bielick, Chandler, and Broughman (2001), which listed ten reasons given by parents in 1999. The number one ranked reason was the belief that the parent could provide the “child” a “better education at home”; ranked second was “Religious reasons” (p. 10). As I coupled my recent experience with homeschooling parents with the results of the study, I was forced to ask myself, just what is God conveying to me regarding ministry? What is being said to us as teachers about Lutheran schooling? What are the implications for outreach?

Upon reflection, I am led to the understanding that ministry begins inside me. Where is my heart? Am I willing to follow when God calls me to give up ideas that I would rather hold on to?

Am I willing to learn those lessons he is trying to teach me? Am I willing to be used in ways I didn’t expect? Looking at ministry in relation to homeschool families means accepting the reality that God may use someone besides

**Looking at ministry in relation to homeschool families means accepting the reality that God may use someone besides Lutheran teachers to disciple children effectively.**

Lutheran teachers to disciple children effectively. Perhaps I haven’t been willing to see parents as truly knowing what is best for their own children.

It’s easy to make the argument that some parents don’t really know how to make good choices for their children. But then I’m reminded that I thought I knew parents like that (for example the pastor’s family indicated above who chose to take their children from “my” school). That mother today is on the Board of Directors of COSLHS, giving her time, talent, and treasure in many ways. Her oldest son will be a ninth grader next year. I know that she is struggling now, as she did when she removed him from the Lutheran elementary school. Her son is advanced in many areas. She wants to be sure that he would be able to continue learning. She still would have many miles to travel to bring him to school, and finances are still an issue. Will he come to our school? I don’t know. But I do know that my heart is changed. I know that I truly can believe that whatever she decides will be appropriate for her son.

She knows him best. She knows his strengths and his weaknesses. And she knows mine.

Whether he comes as a full time or part time student, or if he doesn't come at all, what I've learned is that I can truly welcome all who come, and I can still love those who choose not to come. I have no concerns that they somehow may be taking advantage of me, the school, or anyone else. And that's the very beginning of ministry—to be able to reflect God's love to all those he places around us.

Lutheran school leadership needs to understand the rationale of families opting to homeschool. They believe that they can give their child a better education. Better than what? Better than the school their child would have been attending.

Lutheran schools do a very good job of educating students. Perhaps another lesson here is that we do not do a good enough job of marketing or "blowing our own horns." Last spring's achievement test at COSLHS revealed that the class average of the sophomores in science was at the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile. Should I advertise that fact? Obviously. Why? Because parents who are worried that they may not know science well enough to teach it may decide, for example, to send their child to our high school. It may be only one class in the beginning. But that opens the door for them to find out who we really are and how we really act behind closed doors. It may be our one chance to share the Gospel with them.

A second reason for marketing is even more important. Although the majority of homeschooling families may not be Lutheran, many of them are Christian and want Christian values for their child. Thus, they might consider a Lutheran school, even though they would never consider many other school options. The resulting question is, "How effectively do we talk about the Christian emphasis of our school?" Perhaps we talk about the field trips we take. Part time students are welcome. Do we assume people are coming because of academics and don't really want to hear about Jesus, so we talk primarily about academics? We think we'll just slide Jesus in as a by-product.

Each school is different. God uses each teacher and principal to touch those he brings. He may draw those who can only use our school for one class, for library purposes, for sports purposes, for whatever needs they have in their lives. Ultimately, while we may not be able to serve every person who comes to our doors, we can be open to discussing ways we might more effectively reach a larger population of students who need what we have to offer. We can pray that God opens our eyes to see the opportunities that he has placed in front of us and provide ways to help us connect with a hurting world who needs the message of hope that we have to offer.

## *A Lutheran School Responds to Homeschooling*

For the interested reader who wishes to learn more about Lutheran homeschooling, a publication called *Feed My Lambs* is available at a subscription price of \$6.00 per year. The editors, Steve and Robin Teske, may be contacted at 408 W. Summit Ave., Shenandoah, Iowa 51601-2336. The publication features, among others, articles such as high schoolers writing why they like homeschooling. The editors have contact with people in different regions of the country, if one wanted to find a connection with someone who actually homeschools. Also, for those desirous of gaining additional understanding regarding homeschool issues, the website [www.vegsource.com/homeschool/](http://www.vegsource.com/homeschool/) has many different types of discussion boards and is a place one could ask questions or just read about the different issues being described by homeschool families.

Many public school districts throughout the country are beginning to take initiative and lead the way in offering resources assisting homeschoolers. Lutheran schools can learn from these initiatives and can be on the cutting edge of leading the way. It is a heart issue. Are we willing to consider education from a new and non-defensive perspective.†

*Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Cor. 15:58b*

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## HAND IN HAND: A MINISTRY THROUGH EDUCATION

*Dr. Phyllis Agness and Dr. Beverly Parke are both active board members of Hand in Hand Ministry. Dr. Agness was a founder of the ministry and currently serves as the chair of the board. Both Agness and Parke are assistant professors in the School of Education at Indiana University—Purdue University, Fort Wayne.*

**A**nother morning begins at Hand in Hand Ministry, a mission outreach preschool designed to furnish at-risk children with the tools they need to increase their opportunities for success in school and life situations. The children file into the classroom from the program's van. Each has a story that compels attention. A quick scanning of the files in the preschool director's office garners the following information:

- John is brain damaged, due to having been kept subdued with alcohol every day for the first three years of his life.
- Crystal has an eating disorder (gorging and then vomiting), due to having so often been hungry and getting food out of dumpsters. Now, when food is available, she can't stop eating.
- Michael is most likely being sexually molested in his aunt's home, where he is now living because both parents are in jail.
- Megan and her sister were sexually molested by their father and have been living with their mother while their father was in jail. Her father is now out

of jail and her mother allows him access to the girls.

- Ryan is four years old, is not toilet trained, and has never drunk from a cup. He has no true developmental delays, but he is being raised by his teenage mother who is mentally disabled.
- Doug and Ben are brothers who live in a foster home, as a result of having been severely physically and emotionally abused by their parents. They are terrified of all adults.
- Belinda resides in a homeless shelter each day. Owing to her mother's cocaine addiction, she has spent all four years of her life in transient facilities. She has been moved eleven times in four years.<sup>1</sup>

It is too disturbing to continue to glance at these files. Obviously, this is not a typical preschool. It is also not the type of preschool that we would expect to find at Epiphany Lutheran Church in suburban Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Hand in Hand students are referred by social service agencies throughout the Fort Wayne area, for it is these children that are most in need of a stable learning environment. Circumstances under which the children live include violence, abandonment, homelessness, starvation, abuse, and chronic family illness. Through multi-age groupings, Hand in Hand provides students with an opportunity to explore their world from a safe and stimulating vantage point.

## **The Beginning**

Hand in Hand Ministry has operated for three years. It was founded, after two years of study, by a small group of members of Epiphany Lutheran Church. Through their professional work experiences, these individuals recognized the existence of a large population of preschool-age children in the Fort Wayne area who were "falling through the cracks" when it came to educational programs. There were no preschool programs available to these children. They had not yet been given diagnostic labels of disabled (which would require the public school to provide a program.). There were not enough available spots in the Head Start programs (700 slots for 3000 children who need them) and the families could not pay tuition. If tuition were provided, they would not have the transportation needed to attend. The children often lacked toilet training or other important social skills. Their life situations were such that they did not fit into a "regular" preschool program. Having the greatest need for structure,

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<sup>1</sup> All student names are pseudonyms.



security, and educational and social opportunities, these children were often the first to be shut out of necessary programs.

As plans developed to create an outreach ministry for these at-risk preschoolers, the prospect of establishing a program seemed overwhelming. This program would need to be different from any other established program. In addition to the typical needs of a preschool, this one would require unusually compassionate staff that were knowledgeable in child development, transportation to and from school, and programs that would provide support to families, as well as the children. The financial support and emotional commitment of members of Epiphany Lutheran Church would also be critical.

Hand in Hand Ministry opened its doors in January of 1998, with the support of a \$252,000 three-year grant

from The Lutheran Foundation, a Christ-centered ministry of Lutheran Churches in Northeast Indiana. This grant, in addition to contributions from church members; organizations, and interested individuals in the community, allowed the program to operate for a three and a half-year trial period. During the first three years of operation, the program served two groups of eight students. Each group attended five half-days each week.

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## **The Present**

Due to the success of the Hand in Hand program, The Lutheran Foundation provided an additional three-year grant, which began in the fall of 2001. A full-day program five days a week was introduced for the 2001-2002 school year. The change resulted from an obvious critical need for the children to be in a structured environment for a greater amount of time each day. A part-time family development specialist is also employed for the 2001-2002 school year.

## The Faces of Hand in Hand

The realities apparent through Hand in Hand Ministry have revealed the validity of some generally accepted educational theories, and provide the term “at-risk” a face. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1968) suggests that before children can be ready to move to the level of learning (knowledge, understanding, aesthetics and self-actualization), they must first have their basic needs (physiological, safety and security, belonging and self-esteem) met. The children referred to the Hand in Hand program are often deficient in all of these areas. Many of the parents of the children have not had their own basic needs met throughout their lives, leaving them ill-equipped to meet those of their children. If the children were to move into kindergarten programming without having any of these needs met, they could very well be destined for failure and the cycle of abuse, neglect and despair would continue. The information gathered on the 42 children served by the program during its three-year existence reveals that:

- 45% have been in foster care
- 54.7% have suffered from neglect
- 19% have been physically or sexually abused
- 19% have a family member in prison
- 54.7% are involved in a family in crisis (homeless, transient, medical crisis, etc.)
- 19% are living in a shelter for the homeless
- 19% are dealing with fetal alcohol related problems
- 23% have parents who have developmental delays.

The foregoing data indicate that the children participating in Hand in Hand are deficient at the lowest levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy and need unique services.

The staff identified ten components (Parke & Agness, in print) that provide the framework of the Hand in Hand program.

1. **Developmentally Appropriate Practices.** Learning activities are hands-on. All senses are used in exploration. Exposure to language and reading is emphasized. Making friends is a skill taught—not taken for granted. Learning activities take into account family structure and family context. The staff, well versed in child development, fashions the learning environment so that a sense of community is established from the onset.
2. **Limited Group Size.** Due to the complexity of the issues being faced by the children participating in Hand in Hand, maximum class size is eight students. A teacher and classroom aide are present at all times. There are often volunteers or university students present as well. Adult to student

ratio is, at the greatest, one to four and, at times, one to two. Meaningful relationships allow for real learning to begin.

3. **Increased Class Time.** Knowing that the needs of the children referred to Hand in Hand are greater than those of most children in more typical preschools, the staff set a fifteen hour a week minimum for the children's involvement in the program. With the addition of a full-day program, the children will receive exposure approximately thirty-two and a half hours a week. This allows for the deepening of relationships, more intense time for preschool curriculum, time for working on important social skills, and time to help each find

the child within him/herself who has never been allowed to develop and play.

4. **Predictable Routines.** Children who come to Hand in Hand live in circumstances best described as unpredictable, chaotic, stressful, isolated, and lacking in stimulation and

consistent discipline. It is the goal of the program to provide an environment that is the exact opposite. Priority is given to the order of the day. Children are involved in planning time at the beginning of the day. They use their daily planners to "write" how they plan to use their time and in which of the available options they will participate. This is a *Project Safe Start* (Fry-Miller, 1995) classroom where rules are consistent, a simple rule chart is posted, and safe songs and puppets are used to model how a safe environment works. The staff constantly patterns self-talk for the students

A key component of the Hand in Hand program is the direct sharing of the hope that a Christian experiences. The children have typically experienced many unsafe and threatening situations. They often face their world with uncertainty. The constant gentle message that Jesus loves them and will always be with them brings great comfort.

in order that they may develop the internal self-talk they need to function safely.

5. **Consistent Discipline, Structure, and Choices.** In order for children to survive and flourish in a life that is defined by chaos, they must develop personal discipline. The Hand in Hand environment encourages the child to express feelings appropriately, recognize the feelings of others, negotiate, employ appropriate self-talk, analyze options for conflict resolution, and choose to act in ways that show self-discipline. During Discovery Time, through constant staff interactions, the students are guided toward successful interaction with others. The choices available in the classroom change, but the structure of the learning environment stays the same. The ability to schedule and plan ahead is practiced each day. The students participate in a predictable environment in which personal responsibility and decision-making are encouraged.
6. **Jesus' Story of Hope.** A key component of the Hand in Hand program is the direct sharing of the hope that a Christian experiences. The children have typically experienced many unsafe and threatening situations. They often face their world with uncertainty. The constant gentle message that Jesus loves them and will always be with them brings great comfort. During "Jesus Time" each day, the staff shares stories of Jesus' life and love. During every moment of the day, the Christian staff is being Jesus' hands reaching out to frightened or confused children. The children, and often their families, respond with enthusiasm and a remarkable level of relief. During home visits, staff members have been told that the children often insist on family prayer at meals. During "Jesus Time," the children often share thoughts about Jesus helping them when they feel sad, wanting to see heaven, and telling family and friends that Jesus loves them. The message of Christ has brought an obvious change in the lives of many of the children participating in the program.
7. **Positive Relationships with Adults and Children.** The children referred to Hand in Hand often have good reasons not to trust adults. Adults may have put the child's life and welfare at risk through abuse, neglect or abandonment. It is a primary goal of the staff to assist the children in the development of trusting relationships with adults who will not harm them. Consistent one to one contact with caring adults allows this to slowly develop. Through adult guidance, the children come to learn that other children can be their allies, rather than adversaries.

8. **Teamwork.** Many of the children at Hand in Hand have been involved in struggles for personal survival. They are not involved in a family that models cooperation and mutual support. Through consistent modeling and assistance in making good choices, the staff leads the children to an understanding of the comfort and advantages of working together as a team.
9. **Project Approach and Integrated Curriculum.** With one of the program goals being readiness for kindergarten, a great deal of program time is spent on the skills needed to make the transition from preschool to kindergarten successfully. An integrated curricular approach is taken, beginning with concepts the children already know. Each project involves hands-on activities, discussion of the topic, learning vocabulary related to the topic, reading about the topic, etc. The children often initiate the projects with their questions about their environment. These questions have related to the types of birds on the feeders outside the classroom windows, what the ingredients of their snacks are, and how potatoes grow. Children who have experienced a very small world expand their perspectives with wild enthusiasm when the gifted staff appropriately guides them.
10. **Emersion in Language and Literacy.** Each day books are read, sometimes by the staff or volunteers, other times by students using their own imaginations as they view the pictures. Children are encouraged to talk, talk, and talk. Books and writing materials are everywhere. The typical pencils, markers, and crayons are used, as are pudding, paint, sand, and frosting. Children express themselves through dance, blocks, songs, “speaker time,” and art. Activities must be constantly fluid in order to challenge all children. A few of the children have typical vocabulary for their age. But most are delayed and some are nonverbal, usually due to neglect or post-traumatic stress. Much catching up needs to occur. A constant emersion in language is the only hope of preparing these children for school.

## **Unique Program Characteristics**

In order to meet the exceptional needs of the group of children referred to Hand in Hand, the staff and board have developed services and experiences that are unique. One of the greatest initial needs was providing transportation for children who could not otherwise attend preschool. From the inception of the program, the van ride has been treated as a part of the school day. The van driver serves not only to pick up children, but also to start and end their school day in a positive, structured and educational manner. The policies in the classroom hold true for the van. The driver

engages the children in conversation that is vocabulary building, singing the songs that they love and discussing the environment and their community. The van driver functions as the closest link with the parents/caregivers and attempts positive interactions both morning and afternoon. Important relationships are built before, during, and after the van runs.

One of the most successful projects for the Hand in Hand Ministry has been an ongoing relationship with the senior citizens at Towne House, an assisted living center. Once a week, the children travel by van to spend time with their “friends.” This intergenerational program provides positive contact for two groups of society’s most typically isolated individuals (at-risk children and seniors). The children bring joy and excitement to the lives of the elderly, and the seniors provide positive adult role models for the

children. The warmth and love that the children receive from the seniors allows for the establishment of the “foster grandparent” concept. The children take books, art supplies, and games to share with their friends. Many important personal relationships have developed over three years’ time. Both groups are provided with the opportunity to give as well as to receive.

Hand In Hand Ministry is making a profound difference in the lives that it touches. Unfortunately, the children served through Hand in Hand represent only a small percentage of children in Fort Wayne, and all other communities, who have need for such a program.

## **The Future**

The mission statement of Hand in Hand states: “The Hand in Hand Ministry of Epiphany Lutheran Church shares the compassion of Christ with at-risk children and their families through support and encouragement in educational and social settings.”

The most difficult part of the mission to accomplish successfully has been the work with the families. In spite of home visits, regularly scheduled conferences, open invitations to the classroom, parent nights, and picnics, the rate of parent participation has been very limited. An important future goal is to examine additional methods of providing support to the families. It is anticipated that the addition of a

family development specialist to the staff will assist in this process.

There is much to learn by studying the children and the programming of Hand in Hand Ministry. In addition to the staff consistently charting, recording, and studying the successes and failures of the program, the authors are engaged in a longitudinal study of the effects of the program on the children. We conduct regular vocabulary and behavioral assessment, and follow-up occurs as the children enter kindergarten and progress through school. Due to the transient nature of this population, the program faces many challenges. However, the valuable information that is gained can be used to improve the program and encourage the establishment of additional programs.

Hand In Hand Ministry is making a profound difference in the lives that it touches. Unfortunately, the children served through Hand in Hand represent only a small percentage of children in Fort Wayne, and all other communities, who have need for such a program. It is the goal of the board and staff not only to support and build the present program, but also to encourage other congregations to consider supporting similar ministries. All who are active with the program are making presentations at conferences, small group meetings, and churches in order to encourage others to consider, or reconsider, the true role of the church in Christian education. Who but these children could better represent "the least of these" who Christ has commanded us to serve?†

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## Breaking the Rules of Good Management

Among the many roles of a school administrator is that of manager of teachers. A manager's function in a school is to work to release the teachers' talents for the good of the students.

The book *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently* (1999) is the result of a huge research study undertaken by the Gallup Organization over the past 25 years. More than one million employees from a wide variety of occupations were surveyed, and 80,000 managers were interviewed.

The authors were quick to note that the most powerful discovery from this research was that talented employees need great managers. Employees may join a company or a school for a variety of reasons, but how long they stay and how productive they are is determined in large part by their relationship with their immediate supervisors (p. 36).

After lengthy interviews with managers who excelled at turning the talents of their employees into performance, it became obvious that the best managers think unconventionally. They reject many of the commonly held assumptions. One of these assumptions is that an employee can become anything she wants to be if she is willing to work long enough and hard enough. Great managers know there is a limit as to how much remolding can take place in a person. Many of the great managers said something like this: "People don't change that much. Don't waste time trying to put in what was left out. Try to draw out what was left in. That is hard enough" (pp. 56-57). If that is the case, the manager's job is to find a role for his employees that takes advantage of those talents. The application for principals is obvious. Their time and energy is best spent when focused upon how to capitalize on each teacher's strengths.

The study also found that effective managers define the desired outcomes and then let each person find her own path to those outcomes (p. 110). School administrators, for example, must be mindful of the big picture. They need to concentrate on how the students are growing as children of God and less on things such as teachers' lesson plans or the volume of noise within the classrooms. When principals give teachers the autonomy to work toward desired outcomes in their own ways, they help to nurture each teacher's self-awareness and self-reliance. Teachers' efforts are maximized, as is the students' learning.

Great managers avoid the temptation to think there is one best way for their employees to perform every role. They give their employees the freedom to work in a way that maximizes their

## Administrative Talk

by Glen Kuck



talents. A principal may easily fall into the temptation of thinking teachers need to adhere to a strict pedagogical formula. The authors state, "In your attempts to get your people to perform, never try to perfect people. The temptation may be captivatingly strong, but you must resist it. It is a false god" (p. 115). A principal's job is not to perfect people but to capitalize on each person's unique gifts. Good principals help teachers use their special talents. They realize that all teachers need to comply with school policies and do things that engender feelings of cooperation and teamwork among the rest of the faculty. But they also know that limiting their teachers' unique talents for the sake of uniformity is a waste of God's gifts.

But how can an administrator help each teacher to build on her talents and become more of who she already is? The authors contend that one part of the answer lies in conversations with the teacher that intentionally focus on her strengths and talents. By doing so, the principal is helping the teacher see her talents and is encouraging the teacher to use them more fully. The principal is helping the teacher to take responsibility for who she is (p. 143).

The authors note that the saying, "Everyone is exceptional" has a second meaning. It connotes that everyone should be treated as an exception (p. 151). For principals, this means they take the time to find out each teacher's feelings and preferences, both about school and whatever personal things she'd like to share. Good principals make every teacher feel exceptional and not simply as just another faculty member.

The best managers break the Golden Rule. They don't treat everyone the way they themselves want to be treated. The way a manager wants to be treated may not be the way someone else wants to be treated (p. 151). They realize that each person is unique. For example, some teachers may want to be praised in public, and some don't. Some crave the chance to speak in public while others don't. Some like to spend time alone in their classrooms before and after school, and some feel slighted if they don't get a daily visit from the principal. Good principals take the time to get to know each teacher.

The best managers don't treat everyone equally. In their efforts to maximize their employees' talents, good managers do three things: they create a unique set of expectations that will focus each individual's talents, they highlight and perfect each person's unique style, and they plot how they, the managers, can run interference for each employee (p. 154). Good principals let their teachers know that they will do whatever they can to help them be the best teachers they can be.

A good principal realizes the teachers don't work for him. He works for the teachers. In their roles as managers, principals do whatever they can to put teachers into the best possible positions to teach effectively. Once they've done so, good principals know how to get out of the way and let teachers teach and learners learn.✧

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## How Important is Certification?: A DCE's Journey

Let me begin by saying, "my journey is not everyone's journey." And my journey would not work for everyone else. But I do believe that God has given us the tools with which to share Jesus in our congregations and the means with which to learn how to best use those tools.

At one time I said, "I will never become a DCE." Since that time I have learned "never say never" when it comes to God and his ministry. My dream was to become a classroom teacher in a Lutheran school, and that is what I became. I served as a Lutheran school teacher for 10 years until my "Jonah story" began. I wanted to be serving in one place, but God had other plans for me.

Through various paths, different opportunities, and knowing some really awesome people, I ended up serving a congregation in Iowa, doing youth and education ministry on a full time basis. I wasn't actually called as a Director of Christian Education, but I was doing what most other DCE's do, or so I thought.

The ministry seemed to be going well; the youth and education ministry seemed enhanced and the pastor was encouraging and supportive. I was surviving. I began to think, "what else does a 'DCE type' need"? (Non-certified DCEs are referred to as "DCE Types" in my district.) Suddenly, that became the question. What does a "DCE type" need? The pastor with whom I served began encouraging me to become a certified DCE. Since I was already working on a Master's in Education I contacted the DCE program director at the same college and started the enrollment process.

Some people asked why I wanted to go back to college. I was already doing the work without the certification, so why spend the time and the money to become certified? The questions were valid, but for me it was a matter of staying in the system. I wanted to be a rostered minister of religion in the LC-MS and to be a professional in my occupation. As I looked at the idea of professionalism and credibility, other issues came to mind. Most people wouldn't go to a doctor who didn't have the education or degrees necessary to fulfill her occupation, even if she said that she really wanted to heal people. Likewise, we wouldn't go to a mechanic to fix our car if he said that he really liked working on cars and had read a few books about it. And we wouldn't go to a

## DCE Expressions

by Lori R. Potratz, Redeemer Lutheran, Sioux City Iowa

counselor for help if his placard read, “I know minds and have read some books about counseling.” I believe the same ideas apply to DCE ministry.

As an educator, I knew that I didn’t possess all knowledge. I felt that in order to do my best with the gifts and talents God had given me I would need to go back to school and receive further training. And I was glad that I did. While taking classes and networking with field DCEs, I learned what I had been doing wrong and what great possibilities there were in both youth and educational ministry. Most of the DCE classes enhanced my way of thinking about this type of ministry. The classes also affirmed me in many ways, confirming that I had done some things right and hadn’t been a complete fumbling fool during the past year of my “DCE type” ministry.

## **Reasons for Becoming Certified**

After becoming certified I realized how this opportunity had opened many doors for me professionally that would not have otherwise been there. I was able to meet some of the finest DCEs in the country and to learn from them. And I was able to set up a network of fellow DCEs and build relationships with others as I would never have had the chance to do had I not become certified.

There is a certain faction of people in our synod who still do not accept the DCE and other auxiliary offices of ministry as valid. Having people not certified, yet working in our congregations, adds fuel to their fire and even some validity. At a time when we can be bringing about unity, we are only adding more division. Professionalism and credibility are big issues in today’s society. I think it is the same for the DCE profession. We are dealing with sharing Jesus with children, youth, and adults. We are dealing with a person’s eternal life as well as with her earthly life. And we are dealing with something so precious and so fragile that doing so without the proper education and training could possibly damage someone’s spiritual life. Even with education and training, we face certain risks every time we share the Gospel message with fellow Christians and non-Christians as well. If training is available, why not take it?

## **What’s Our Role as Certified DCE’s?**

I always encourage the “DCE types” to look into certification. I tend to get frustrated when I listen to those who haven’t gone through the “process” complain about their congregations getting on them when their ministry areas are failing and they don’t know why. It takes more than just a love for the Lord and a desire to work with youth, children, or whomever. Let’s be proactive in adding to the credibility and validity of our ministry by encouraging people to become certified DCEs. I would encourage those of you who are certified DCEs to mentor and support those in your areas who are not, and encourage them to get the education necessary for certification.✠

## Genuinely Making the Grade: School Performance Ensemble Assessment

It seems that what first exists if a school has any music is some performance ensemble, usually a choir before any other. Performance experiences for students of all ages are wonderful opportunities, often generating some of the fondest memories of school days: worship participation, concerts, tours, audience reactions, friendships, things accomplished, and the joy of music making purely for art's sake.

As vehicles for students' learning and musical growth, however, performance ensembles *must* be part of the curriculum. They are some of the best places for students actually to make music. Hopefully, we are beyond performance ensembles solely for the production of concerts or music for chapel services. Those things, while important, are not the ends but some of the means by which students' musical abilities are developed, practiced, and refined. If we are defending performance ensembles as a normal part of the school day, we must ask whether they are structured to allow for learning and growth. How are we measuring students' musical growth and to what level each is developing? How are we assessing performance?

Assessing students in performance areas is challenging because of the affective/subjective aspects of these experiences. The merits of grading systems have been debated throughout the history of education; this is not the forum for that discussion. Whatever one believes about grades, there must always be growth, improvement, and learning from our students; as music educators, we must know what our students first bring to an ensemble and how far and in what areas they develop through their membership in it. In evaluating each student musically, then, using the system you and your school have in place for student assessment, you must go beyond merely tallying attendance. A parent would have a hard time accepting that her child received an 'A' in math solely for perfect attendance. Math learning involves many facets of understanding and skill development. So does music. While attendance may be a factor, if it represents a substantial percentage of a student's assessment, we are no longer treating the ensemble experience as academic learning.

What kinds of skills can and should be developed through ensemble rehearsals? One skill common to all ensembles is music reading ability. Do your students read music? Instrumental

## Educating the Whole Child

by Jean Harrison

ensemble members tend to have the advantage in this area over vocal ensembles. Sadly, students too often spend years singing in choirs without developing music reading skills. Is music reading one of the goals of your ensemble? Do you know who can read music and to what level? Do your students improve as the year progresses? If you answer “no” to any of these questions, why not? Here is an area that *must* be taught, monitored, and measured. This skill should be reflected in each student’s assessment throughout their school ensemble experience.

How much do your students know about the composers of the music they are learning? This area, too, is common to all ensembles. Learning *about* the music as well as learning the music is basic. Rehearsals must be comprehensive. Go beyond the composer’s name (make sure *you* know about the music you are teaching). Often students are unable to remember even the title of a piece they have spent hours rehearsing, let alone being familiar with the composer, compositional style, time period, and form of the piece at the very least. Even something as basic as what the title means is often neglected in the rehearsal process. This factual knowledge is easy to teach and to assess and should also be reflected in each student’s assessment.

We are in the business of developing musical people. Do our students know about the expressive aspects of music making? Do they recognize and respond to the expressive symbols on each page they play or sing? Do our rehearsals themselves go beyond the mere technical aspects of note reading and reproduction? Yes, musicians need to play or sing the right notes at the right time with the correct duration, but they also need to do all those things expressively or the essence of music is lost in the blandness of mechanics. Teach musically and with feeling throughout every rehearsal. Challenge students in the interpretation of each musical selection they learn. Pay attention to each student’s understanding and ability to express through their voice and/or their instrument. Watch for growth, listen for improvement, encourage every attempt, and nurture expressive ideas individually, in sections, and within the full ensemble. Make sure that these components of musical growth and development are also reflected in each student’s musical assessment.

Whatever system you use to evaluate your students, make sure it is multifaceted. It needs to measure the development of musical ability within each person. If we believe that music is of value to every student and must be an essential part of every school curriculum then we must *be* educators. Certainly we must make sure what we teach is appropriate, that the materials we use are quality works that allow students to learn musical concepts, but we must also know our students’ ability levels throughout the process. We must use a variety of means to monitor, measure, and evaluate the progress of our students in areas of musical knowledge, skill development, and musicianship. We must properly communicate that evaluation to our students and their parents, but most importantly we must use that information ourselves to assist with the continual improvement of our programs and our instruction and with the selection of materials. Performance is part of the process of genuine music learning.†

## The Three C's

The ideal ministry: unlimited resources, plenty of space, no time constraints. Right? Though these phrases may be regular parts of the Lutheran educator's dreams about the "perfect day," no one is blessed with such accumulated luxuries. Time, space, and resources are gifts that are to be used wisely by good stewards whose challenge it is to apply them to ministry. Though such gifts are not unlimited, they are abundant. *How* we utilize what God has given us to teach, lead, and nurture his people depends upon our relationships with people.

Because educators in Lutheran ministries do not operate in vacuums, we rely upon others to work with us in a variety of capacities. Individual talents, interests and skills are enhanced when other Lutheran educators are involved. Those to whom we minister benefit from the rich diversity of experiences, training, cultural traditions and resources brought together by common interests or needs. The settings vary and the reasons change, but educators at all levels can attest to the fact that human interaction makes ministry tasks more enjoyable, increases productivity, and results in greater efficiency. Recent research among Lutheran teachers suggests that positive relationships among colleagues increase overall satisfaction with ministry and diminish the likelihood of leaving the teaching ministry.

When an intentional effort is made to apply relational elements to teaching and leadership, exciting things can happen. Innovative ideas are birthed. New programs are initiated. Long-term success is made more possible with multiple participants than when limited to individual involvement. *Change* becomes a positive, motivational goal rather than a challenging, disorienting roadblock.

Opportunities for planned, proactive ministry among two or more individuals can be best placed into three categories: *connectedness*, *coordination*, and *collaboration*. All three levels of interactivity provide Lutheran educators with the means to become more efficient, effective, and creative in their ministries by not relying exclusively on themselves. However, each one carries with it different features and challenges.

Educators in Lutheran ministries are by our very nature "connected." First, we are connected to those whom we serve. Adults and youth in congregations, students, families, and community members are all at the very heart of our ministries. We are also connected to resources (both material and human) in other institutions and from the abundance of sources now

# Today's Lutheran Educator

by Jonathan Laabs, Executive Director of the Lutheran Education Association

available in our world. But the most valuable connections are those we have with fellow Lutheran educators.

In the Winter 2001 issue of *Lutheran Education*, this column highlighted a variety in ways in which “gathering together” is made possible locally, regionally and nationally. This journal itself is a resource that has provided Lutheran education professionals a “connection” with the field of Lutheran education and its diverse authors and topics for more than 137 years. Today, we are presented with countless opportunities for relating to other Lutheran educators whom we may never meet in person via web sites, listservs, chat rooms, electronic bulletin boards, videoconferencing, and satellite communication. Being “connected” is the first step in developing meaningful new working relationships in the profession.

When Lutheran educators have a connection with each other, *coordination* can take place. The most common form of coordination happens day to day in a classroom, office, or building where individuals contribute their time, interests, and resources to accomplish a task. Activities, programs, and events often require coordination involving several people who would otherwise not “connect.” The need to meet a common goal or to achieve a level of success drives the effort. Bringing school populations together for a special Lutheran Schools Week rally, assembling several staffs for a “thank-you” dinner, and conducting graduate courses for area educators at a local congregation are just a few examples of coordinated efforts.

There are times and situations where more resources, expertise, and creativity need to be brought to the table. One person or entity is often not capable of meeting the objective. The complexity of the task can make it even more difficult to achieve. For such scenarios, *collaboration* is essential. More than just cooperation, collaboration is a process requiring strong commitment and trust through which people, groups, and organizations build upon a shared vision, mission, and goals. With some degree of uncertainty and risk, collaborative entities all bring something to the process, share leadership, and mutually benefit from the results.

True collaboration is relatively new to Lutheran education professionals—or to anyone who has been engaged in church work. Though many coordinated efforts have been successfully achieved over the years, the need for a higher level of interdependence has more recently been apparent due to fewer resources, increasing competition, and a growing desire for better quality. Technological advances have made it possible to pursue new avenues of collaboration, such as the Concordia University Education Network (CUEnet). Colleges, universities, seminaries, schools, congregations, and numerous other agencies are actively engaged in bringing together resources so that new opportunities and enhancements for learning can be developed. Elements of each organization are being redefined as new roles and functions emerge.

Lutheran educators have a long history of commitment to ministry and using their God-given resources efficiently. With new means of working together in hand, we can explore new directions for an even more effective relational ministry among his people.†

## Balancing Life with Hope!

Then there's the story of the couple who got a divorce over religious differences. He thought he was God . . . and she didn't!

Life is about balance: balancing our gifts, our needs, and our hopes in relation to the gifts and needs and hopes of those around us. It is so easy to get "off balance," to focus so much on our own needs that we lose sight of others' needs. Or to be so committed to meeting other people's needs that we get stressed and drained and wiped out because our needs are not being met.

But life goes on. It's called living in the Grace of God! It's called putting our hope and trust in the Lord, who can be trusted! It means knowing that, even when there is no hope in our lives—when classrooms are a mess, relationships are strained, staffs are at each other, families are broken—there always *is* hope, in the name of Christ!

We educators are not called to be perfect. Nor are we called to balance life to the fullest. We can't! We are, however, enabled by the Spirit to live our lives in the Hope that is within us (I Peter 3:15).

God, in Christ, does the balancing for us. His life, death, and resurrection keeps us firm in the faith, even as we totter and sway on the teeter-totters of life.

There still is too much emphasis in our lives about us doing the balancing. I hear from many walks of life the encouragement, cajoling, urging that we change our lives, that if we really love the Lord, we will change and bring joy and happiness to others, and that we all will live "happily ever after." But it just isn't so! It's not going to happen, this side of Heaven.

And that's where hope in the Lord comes in, as a gift from God!

We need to realize finally that telling people to change will not make them change. Bad advice—bad theology! The Lord is the One who continues to bring change into our lives, through forgiveness, and through wooing us back to him, as we continue to mess things up and keep things out of balance.

As a family member likes to say, "The Lord puts *fun* back into dysfunctional!" It is God's gift of hope for all of us that allows us to balance the sinner-saint in all of us.

## Multiplying Ministries

by Rich Bimler



So, go ahead and try to keep those New Year's resolutions. Go ahead and keep a journal of things you want to do. Go ahead and be kind to animals and little children. Work hard at loving others. Keep saying nice things to your church staff members. Keep taking care of your body—it's the only one you have! Try to speak well of everyone. Keep reading your Bible daily, and twice on Sunday! Work at balancing your life between work and play. And on and on and on!

But even more importantly, know that the Lord loves you and forgives you, just as you are. No need to change first before he will love you—he loves you right now, and forever! That is the hope and joy that balances our lives!

So we continue to struggle through life, with hope in the Lord! Hope is not for easy times, but hope comes only when our hope is gone, when we are "fainting from fear." Hope, God's hope, reigns, even when we don't look hopeful, or act hopeful, or feel hopeful.

Hope is not an insane optimism in the face of dire circumstances. It is not the shallow attempt to cheer people up in bad times. Hope, God's hope, is not made of denial. Hope is made of memories.

Hope reminds us that there is nothing we have faced in life that we did not, through God's grace and gifts, survive. Hope is the recall of good in the past, on which we base our expectation of good in the future, however bad the present.

So we hope in the Lord! That's where balance in life begins, continues, and ends.

Enjoy and celebrate with others, the *Hope* that is ours, always, in Christ! Happy Hope-filled day!✠

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"It makes no sense for teachers in Christian institutions to teach as if we have no hope, to teach in uncreative ways, or to teach in ways that never evoke imagination on the part of our students. . . . Put another way, the fact that we serve a God who creates and redeems, who liberates and transforms—the fact that we serve this God is precisely why we must teach with hope. And when we teach with hope, we will inescapably teach with imagination, with creativity, with passion."

Richard Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, 2001

## Why Are You Asking Me That?

For most of my professional life, I have relished the position of the all-knowing, all-seeing sage. I mean, students asked me questions, and I loved to give answers. Especially when they were the correct ones! It filled my ego. For some time I believed that this was the essence of educating another. I am now rethinking my days of being an informational Pez dispenser.

My thoughts on this issue were stirred by a particularly challenging student several years ago. At every turn this student would pose questions, many coming outside the context of the class discussion. And the accompanying tone carried an edge that taunted, "I dare you to answer this one, Teach!" So my flesh reacted. I engaged in the intriguing intellectual jousting for awhile, until it slowly dawned on me that I was not helping this student. He was not interested in learning; his game was arguing, and I was his unwitting foil.

About the same time—God's timing is always good, isn't it?—I read the following in one of my daily talks with God: "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (II Tim. 2:23-26). I was convicted.

The next day I spoke with my fellow combatant and confessed to him. I said I could no longer in good conscience partake in our class debates. God had convinced me that I was doing him a disservice and that the class was not being edified. I "called the question," so to speak, and told him it appeared that we had both fallen prey to Satan's schemes and that he all too often really wasn't interested in discovering the truth. For his part, he acknowledged that truth. The teachable moment had come, and this teacher-student had learned.

Now I try to pause before answering queries. I listen. Sometimes I even ask a clarifying question or muse "hmmm" as I think through possible loving responses. We prefer McDonald's drive thru answers, but we often need slow-food restaurant conversations. What is behind our students' questions? Where are they coming from? Why are they being asked? Sometimes I kindly but bluntly ask, "Why do you want to know?"

## Secondary Sequence

by Craig Parrott, Denver Lutheran High School

Like most educational methods, this one is not new. It is as old as Socrates. But it is effective. It educates: it leads students out of this world's thinking and that of their flesh. It engages the mind of the intellectually honest student and stops the argument from developing by the scoffer.

It is also more true to life. Life is more of a mystery to be lived than a problem to be solved. The more I traverse this path down here, the more I grow wary of those who pretend to know all the answers. And I have met many teachers—and not a few preachers—who always have an answer. Those I once envied, I now suspect. I wonder if trust is more crucial than understanding. To illustrate, thanks to my wife's instruction I realize I will never fully understand women. Thanks to my ninth grade daughter's frequent reminders, I realize that I, too, am often incomprehensible. But both trust me, and I them. And I can live with that.

My hope and prayer is that the students who inquire of me can also come to trust in the One who has all the answers and who frequently withholds them, undoubtedly for his glory and our good.

Our Lord frequently answered questions with a question of his own. Note where his probing would take these people:

“‘Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus responded, ‘Why do you call me good?’” (Mk. 10:17-18).

When the Pharisees were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” Jesus’ response was a question, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?” (Mk. 12:9-12).

Had Jesus answered as we teachers often do, the heart of the matter would have been missed. Wayward assumptions and deceptive thinking would live on. And that means more erroneous conclusions would surely follow.

I have a few favorite questions that have greatly helped me in class discussions. They have provided clarity and focus and have undoubtedly headed off a few foolish arguments. They are:

1. “What do you mean by that?” (A noted philosopher once quipped, “If you wish to discuss with me, first define your terms.”)
2. “Where do you get your information?” (And do not accept “the Internet” for an answer!)
3. “What are the consequences if you are wrong?” and
4. “How do you know you are right?”

Christians these days are often put on the defensive. Whereas there is certainly a time and a place to know how to answer everyone gently with the hope that lies within us, there are also occasions where it is best and most loving to answer questions with a question. Who knows, perhaps God will grant them repentance and lead them to a knowledge of the truth!✠

## Discovering the World with a Young Child

Have you ever watched a toddler watch an ant? Or smell a flower? Or try to follow a butterfly? For the young child, the world is a new and amazing place. Each day, even each moment, is a time of discovery.

Think about a time when you were on a trip and seeing new and amazing sights. Maybe it was the first time you saw the Grand Canyon. Maybe it was your trip to Niagra Falls. Maybe it was the double rainbow you saw last summer. Maybe there is another discovery that is etched in your mind and heart.

Do you remember how you felt? Do you remember how awestruck you were. Do you remember being transfixed with wonder?

### Re-Discovering Wonder

For most of us, there are a handful of awe-some events and sights through which we can re-live a sense of wonder. Let's think together for a moment. What made that event awe-some? Why do you remember it? What did it make you think of?

Was the experience special because there were special people with whom you were sharing the experience? Were you alone? What happened? What did you do or want to do?

Now let's think about children—about a specific child. Have you witnessed a similar sense of wonder in that child? What precipitated that wonder?

For most of us—and for most children—the sense of wonder is magnified when it is shared with another person. It is heightened when we can talk about it with someone who was there, someone who had the same experience at the same time. It is deepened when it is appreciated together. Wonder grows when it is nourished. And it is nourished when it is shared.

### The Wonder of a Child

As you teach and learn with young children, it is critical that you cherish the sense of wonder in those children. For young children, it does not have to be the Grand Canyon or a double rainbow. Everything is new and wonder-full. Every part of God's magnificent creation is a new discovery and a candidate for a reaction of amazement.

Young children react with a sense of wonder to the little discoveries. Just the movement of a bug across the floor, the

**Teaching the Young**  
by Shirley K. Morgenthau

wriggling of a worm after a spring rain, the scent of a flower in the neighbor's garden—any of these are enough to evoke that wonder, that sense of the magical and magnificent.

What a world God has created for us! It takes a lifetime of learning for us to understand even a small part of that creation. But as we grow older (and wiser?), we often lose a part of that wonder that is so vital to the learning of a young child. We begin to take for granted the wonder-full things in the world around us.

### **Re-Discovering Discovery**

Learning is a process of discovery. It is a means for unfolding the complexity and workings of a phenomenon. We all learn by discovery. The problem with us adults is that we have been in the discovery business for so long that we take it for granted. We don't always notice just how wonder-full it is to learn something new. We become jaded and worn down regarding the newness and wonder of learning. We are too busy and too goal-driven to notice the process of discovery toward that goal.

Real learning almost always has a quality of playfulness about it. Substantive learning is a discovery. Genuine learning requires the learning to go with the process and to go where the learning leads. That's discovery.

Sometimes discovery happens when we least expect it. Sometimes discovery surprises us. Often discovery sneaks up on us.

This does not mean that learning is always easy. It can be extremely challenging and difficult. It can be frustrating. But at the same time, it is amazingly satisfying and energizing. Maybe discovery is a part of what energizes young children!

### **The Science of Discovery**

Discovery begins with keen observation. Observation takes time. It requires patient looking and comparing. When is the last time you truly noticed the difference between the top side and underside of a leaf? When is the last time you looked carefully at the differences between an oak and a maple leaf? When is the last time you discovered these phenomena with a young child?

For the young child, the newness and wonder of the world can often be and become overwhelming. Young children need guides to help them know what to notice.

It's not much different from traveling through a new country with or without a guide. We learn lots of interesting things when we discover a locale on our own. But we learn far more when we explore with a guide who helps us know what to notice, who helps us focus our attention on the most important things to discover, who gives us the background and the color of the area.

But observation by itself is not enough. We also need to notice the patterns, to

compare the new to the known, to build concepts and categories. Young children develop insights and test their observations as they learn.

Discovery also includes nurturing and preserving a sense of awe in that discovery. That awe recognizes the Author of it all—our great God. True learning and discovery are indeed awesome, not in the trite sense in which that word is used today but in a real sense of appreciation of the gifts God gives us all around us each and every day.

## **Building Classrooms for Discovery**

There are some key ingredients in a discovery classroom. Some of those ingredients are things. Some of them are people.

The things needed in a discovery classroom are things of nature—leaves, rocks, insects, pets—anything in which the children in that particular classroom are interested. These things need to be displayed in interesting and attractive ways. And children need to be taught how to carefully observe and compare what is provided.

That's where the people come in. Teachers and aides are also key ingredients in a discovery classroom. Teachers provide the model for discovery. They ask questions. They observe *with* children, pointing out details and patterns for children to notice, to observe.

Effective teachers of young children still have an active sense of wonder themselves. They have not lost the playfulness of learning. They have retained the reverence of and appreciation for the intricacy of God's creation. They are still able to say with conviction, "Isn't God's creation amazing?"

Learning truly is awesome. It's wonderful. No. It's *awe*-some. It's *wonder*-full. It's the foundation for discovery. It's the fuel that drives the need to talk, to read, to create, to dramatize. The learning and discovery of the world of God's creation is the cornerstone of the curriculum.†

**Gunther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix.**  
***Fortress Introduction to The Lutheran***  
***Confessions.* Minneapolis: Augsburg/**  
**Fortress Press, 1999. 226 pages.**

As the authors state in their Preface, the suggestion for this book arose from their experience of introducing the Lutheran Confessions, the *Book of Concord* (1580), to people previously unfamiliar with the documents. This *Introduction*, however, was written not only for college and seminary students and for participants in ecumenical discussions but also for people in the churches who wish "to sharpen their knowledge of the Lutheran tradition" (p. ix).

The focus of the study is the *Book of Concord* itself: "where it comes from, what it contains, and how it has defined Lutheran identity." And given its cultural setting, they maintain, it is still a "historical landmark and a theological foundation" (p. ix).

In the first chapter, "Setting the Stage: The Reformation in Historical Context," we find a perceptive overview of the ecclesiastical and cultural history of the time. The second and third chapters, "The Development of Lutheranism" and "The Lutheran Confessions: The Texts," carry through with the historical framework from chapter one by defining the Lutheran movement as such, and then by emphasizing just how fundamental confessing the faith and the confessional documents have been and still are to the church in its worship, life, and teaching.

The next three chapters deal with the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. In each chapter, the respective writer (as identified either in the Preface or by initials at the end of a section) carefully explains the theological thought-pattern of the scripturally confessed faith as found in each of the Lutheran confessional texts.

In "The Structure of Faith" (Chapter IV), the writer emphasizes that Scripture itself is the theological norm for Christian tradition and confession. Accordingly he explains the theological structure of God's word of law and Gospel, with its basis in the Triune God, and the centrality of the justification of the sinner as norm for Christian faith, confession, and life.

Following through with this basic Scriptural thought-pattern as an articulated norm throughout the Lutheran confessional texts, Chapter V, "The Lutheran Confessions: The Christian

Community,” explicates the Sacrament of Baptism, Repentance and Absolution, the Eucharist, Ministry and Church Order, and the Nature of the Church. Under “Christian Life” (VI), we find “The Arena: Church and World—Two Reigns of God,” “The Conflict: Sin, Free Will, Election,” and “The Goal: Eternal Life.”

For each of the sub-topics (e. g., Repentance, Eternal Life) of the above three chapters, the writer begins by giving a brief overview of the historical and theological background. He then refers to the confessional texts for the specific perspective and treatment of the matter at hand, in keeping with each document’s Biblical references and implicit—and often explicit—Scriptural thought-pattern and norm.

In the last chapter “The Confessions in Worldwide Lutheran Communion” (VII), the confessions are seen as essential for Lutheran identity throughout the world. The Lutheran Confessions both guide and nurture commitment and bond within the global Lutheran community. They also serve as a significant scripturally based reference for, and contribution to, ecumenical discussion and relationships.

A handy resource, this well-written and interesting book includes (in addition to the usual list of abbreviations, a bibliography, and an index) a map of central Europe at the time of the Reformation, a glossary of historical and theological terms and events, and a three-page chart of dates and events under the three columns of (a) Luther and Melancthon, (b) The Reformation, and (c) The Confessions.

Recommended!✠

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# A Final Word

by George C. Heider, President, Concordia University, River Forest, IL

## "Choice" as Seed of Heresy

Heresy—as numerous historians of theology have noted—does not come about by intention. Rather, it results when one takes a single truth or value and then presses it to the exclusion of all other truths and values, ignoring the often-paradoxical nature of our human grasp of the divine. Thus, to use perhaps the most infamous example in Christian history, Arius was so concerned to preserve the truth of the unity of God that he denied the full deity of Christ.

I wonder whether we as a nation have not succumbed to an analogous problem in the public sphere with respect to “choice.” Choice is a good thing. Choice is a corollary to the freedoms on which our country is founded. Choice stands firmly in the face of the coercion of individuals by government or political majorities.

Of course, the rub comes when one applies this value in the context of specific issues and competing values. “Pro-choice” in our society has become a code word for a position favoring unhampered access to legal abortion. However, in the context of the debate engaged in this issue of *Lutheran Education*, it can also represent the position of those in favor of school vouchers that can be used at any institution, public or private.

The irony here is obvious: relatively few Americans find themselves wholeheartedly “pro-choice” in both of these senses of the word. But my point goes beyond the observation of a narrow philosophical inconsistency. The problem, it seems to me, is that too often we allow ourselves to engage in sloganeering in place of argument that acknowledges complexity and what is valid in another’s view (however much we may finally disagree with that view). I am deeply concerned that educational public policy driven solely by the value of “choice” will prove to be as wrong-headed as has public policy surrounding the issue of abortion.

The world—and they that dwell therein—are simply too complex for single values and dimensions to dominate. Choice is important, but it can too often cover for a hyper-individualism that ignores the interests of others (and society’s interests in other values). Oliver Wendell Holmes’s famous search for the “simplicity on the far side of complexity” remains a worthy goal, but we run great risk if we think we have gotten there too soon. Otherwise, we may well find ourselves having won a given legal battle, only to fall victim to the inexorable law of unintended consequences.†